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SAM RICKETTY; Or, A WELL PLANNED PLOT.

By NED BUNTLINE.



"SHAKE HER AS YOU DID HIM, CAPTAIN, AND ALL HER FALSE TEETH WILL DROP OUT," CRIED EVERETT.

SAM RICKETTY;

OR,

A Well Planned Plot.

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CHAPTER I. A FIENDISH PLOT.

Everett Squires lived with his guardian, Peter Philpot. The boy's parents died when he was quite young, and we find him, at twelve years of age, preparing for a sea voyage, which his guardian was strongly opposed to. Peter Philpot undertook to flog Everett, but the boy resisted. Just at this moment the guardian saw the burly form of Nick Hardcastle loom up before him in the doorway.

"A vast heaving! Come to, you slab-sided lubber! I'm no slouch or eavesdropper, but I've seen all that has happened here, heard every word that has passed. And I hold that little man nearer and dearer in my heart now than I did his father before him, and that is a good deal for Nick Hardcastle, master and part owner of the good ship Tideway, to say. But this lad, the son of my old friend, David Squires, is going to sea with me. I'll furnish all he wants. But hark ye, Mr. Peter Philpot, keep strict accounts of his property. Try to wrong him out of one dollar and I'll swing you at my own yard-arm, so help me Moses in the bull-rushes! There, it's as good as sworn to. Now, Everett, gather what traps you want in this bungalow, and come aboard my ship. I sail at turn of tide this afternoon—the ebb makes about four. I'll stay till you are ready. Look here, you miserable baboon! I'm not in the habit of using rough words, but do you anchor in that chair. Don't offer to get up till this boy is ready to go. If you do I'll choke the little soul there is in you into less than an atom. Everett, get all you want."

The guardian sat down in the chair that Captain Hardcastle pointed out. He was very pale and very quiet. He did not want the great rough hands he saw clutched on his slender throat.

And when Everett returned with a large valise, all he could lift, of clothing, and two portraits, exquisitely done in ivory, of his father and mother, the guardian only groaned.

"Is that all you want—can I get up now?" asked Mr. Philpot in a whine to the captain.

"That depends. What else do you want, Everett?"

"My father's gold watch—his name is engraved on it, and that man wears it now."

"That watch! Why, boy. I gave it to your father myself, chain and all. Bought it in London. My name is in it as giver, and the inscription tells it was on his thirtieth birthday. Hand it over, Peter Philpot, to the boy, at once!"

"I'll not do it! So there now!" squeaked the guardian.

"So—I must take you in hand, must I?"

At a stride the giant sea-captain crossed the room, reached out his hands, and taking the lean form up by the two shoulders, shook him till his teeth rattled like castanets.

"Murder! murder!" shrieked the terrified pattern of miserable manhood.

"I reckon it'll have to be!" said the captain, and he shifted one hand to the throat of the struggling wretch.

A gurgling cry, "I'll give up—I'll give up!" caused a temporary release of the strangling pressure.

"You will, eh? Then sit down and write what I tell you to."

The captain pointed to a desk, where papers, pens, and ink, were visible.

Gasping yet from that terrible grip, Peter obeyed the command, for it was nothing less.

"Write," thundered the captain, "these words: 'I, Peter Philpot, in the presence of Captain Hardcastle, one of the witnesses to the will of David Squires, deceased, do hereby surrender to Everett, the son and lawful heir of David Squires, the watch and chain of said David Squires, which was left to said Everett Squires, by said will, and I also give my full consent that the said Everett Squires can go to sea with the said Captain Nick Hardcastle, in his good ship Tideway, and remain with him until he is of full age, if the said Everett Squires may so desire.'"

Slowly, looking over Peter's shoulder to see that every word was written, Captain Hardcastle dictated the paper. When it was finished and signed, the captain put his name down as a witness. Then he folded the paper and placed it inside a pocket-book, which was heavy already with bank-notes.

And with a face that spoke unutterable wretchedness, Peter Philpot took the valuable watch and chain from his lean person and handed it to the hero of our story, for from this point on Everett Squires will be found in that position.

"Now, Everett, come. Mr. Peter Philpot, good-morning!"

"Ev—you, Ev!" screamed a shrill voice, that rang out like that of a parrot, in the hall which led to the library.

"Whose hail is that?" asked the captain.

"My sister Samantha is coming; if she had been here five minutes sooner you wouldn't have got that paper and watch from me," snarled Peter.

"Wouldn't we? I've met *she* snap-dragons before!" said the captain, quietly.

Miss Samantha Philpot was as tall, as lean as an aligator, and as ugly as her brother Peter. And she was ten years older—that is, turned of fifty years. And she was stingy in looks, stingy in dress, stingy in nature.

"You can come now, Everett; I'll carry the dunnage," said the captain, paying no attention to the old virago.

And he took up the valise which Everett had filled.

"He shall not go! Do you hear me?" she cried, as she planted herself fairly in the door-way.

"Go it, Samantha, go it! He daren't lay a hand on you!" screamed Peter.

"Don't let her lay her heart on that idea, if she has any," said the captain, as he strode toward the door.

But Everett had a new idea, and he wanted to pay off an old score.

"Shake her as you did him, captain, and all her false teeth will come out, and her hair will drop, too. She hasn't a hair of her own on her head."

The captain reached out his hand to carry out the shaking process, but it was not needed. Shrinking, the virago left. The exposure was more than she could endure.

And then, with nothing to bar their departure, Captain Hardcastle and Everett Squires left the house where the brave boy was born, the house which had been a paradise to him until his dear parents had passed away within a few weeks of each other, leaving him to the care of a distant relative—the guardian already before us.

Peter Philpot stood as if he was in a stupefied state, and gazed upon the departing boy and his friend, Captain Hardcastle, until they were out of sight. Then he cast a careless glance at the shelves of a well chosen and costly library, and muttered:

"I'd soon have all that trash turned into money, if I hadn't been forced to turn a catalogue of the books over when I gave my bonds as executor and guardian. Everything in the house is inventoried. But if the boy drowns, or dies, while he is gone, then everything is mine! Yes, and it would put well on to two hundred thousand dollars in my possession!"

"A big stake, boss! Why don't you play for it?"

Peter Philpot jumped as if he had been shot through the heart, as those words, in a hoarse, gruff voice, fell on his ears.

Trembling from head to foot, he turned and saw a coarse, repulsive-looking man, with a shade over one eye, a face pecked full of small-pox pits, with a nose turned all over to one side, it having been broken at the bridge, in some brutal encounter probably.

"Who are you, and how came you here?" stammered Peter, his knees shaking yet with fright.

"It don't matter much who I am just now; as to comin' in, there was nothin' to hinder. Two chaps went out and left the front door wide open, and one chap o' my size walked in—that isn't burglary!"

"What do you do for a living?"

"I steal mostly, boss; it's easier than work. Got any silver around here?"

"No; it is all in the bank. You said you saw two persons go out of this house? Would you know them if you saw them again?"

"Yes—a man and a boy. Man carried a valise; boy was a cry-in'."

"What would you take to put that boy out of the way so he'd never be seen or heard of again?"

"I'd do it for just half what you'd gain by the biz. It's risky—get caught and you swing!"

"I know it. But I couldn't give half. My sister would take a third, no matter what I got."

"Then if I do the job I'll take a third, too. But it's got to be sure. I don't fool my time. You can remember that. If I get fooled, the chap that fools me dies!"

"That boy goes to sea this afternoon at high tide."

"So much the better. There's a thousand chances afloat, where there's ten ashore. Give me a hundred dollars down as a clincher, put our bargain in black and white, and I'll go to sea with that boy on the first of ebb. He'll never come back; but I shall, for my third!"

Half an hour later, Butcher Sam, as he called himself, when the bargain was put on paper, started to ship on the Tideway, if he could get a berth that way—if not to go on board as a stow-

away, with but one object, and that the destruction of the orphan boy, Everett Squires.

It lacked but an hour of high tide when the captain and his protegee stepped on board. The first mate touched his cap, and said:

"Glad to see you, cap. I'm afraid we'll be two hands short. The shipping-master says that two of the men backed out after signing the papers, refused the advance, and he can't fill their places to-day."

"Well, men or no men, Mr. Combs, we go to sea at the turn of the ebb. Here is Everett Squires, the son of my best friend; he goes with us, and inside of a week you'll see him on the royal yard as smart as any one aboard."

"I'm right glad to see him, sir. He has a bright look, and I'll warrant will do well aloft and below."

While the captain stood yet near the gang-way, a man whose face was pitted with old small-pox marks, and whose nose, broken at the bridge in some long-past fray, looked as if it was sliding toward his left ear, stepped on board and asked if they were full-handed. He would like to ship if he could get a berth.

This man had two good eyes now. The disguising patch was not needed, for the game before him was not burglary.

"What can you do?" asked the captain, not liking the man much, but still noticing that he had a stout, hardy-looking frame, and the look of an able seaman.

"All that an able-bodied seaman is called to do—reef and furl, take my turn at the wheel, eat my rations, and work without grumbling, sir."

"We're short a hand or two. I reckon we can take you. Want any advance?"

"No, sir; only want twenty-five minutes to get my clothes-bag and hammock."

"All right! be aboard by that time, for we sheet home and cast off at the turn o' tide."

"I'll be on hand, sir; never fear for Sam Ricketty—what he says he'll stick to."

The new hand took one sharp glance at the boy who stood beside the captain, and then hurried off.

A cold shiver ran over the boy's frame as that glance fell on him—he knew not its cause, but he felt from that moment that the new hand and he would not be friends. Yet he did not speak of it. He did not feel as if he had any reason he could give for such a thought.

CHAPTER II.

MAN OVERBOARD.

For three long weeks, almost without touching tack or sheet, before a stiff but steady breeze, the good ship of Captain Hardcastle drove on her course, no incident worth noting on her log book occurring.

About this time the fair wind they had been blessed with so long slackened up, and they began to have airs as variable as the time of a beer-drinking opera singer—a red-headed one at that. The barometer fell suddenly, just at night, and the captain, coming out from the cabin, told Mr. Combs, who had the first watch, to take in the light canvas, and to be ready to reef down the other sails if a gale came on.

"Lay out and furl away!" came the order, keen and loud.

Everett Squires was the first out, well toward the lee yard-arm, while an older hand went to windward, and another took the bunt of the sail. While on the slender main rope, his hands busy with the flapping sail, Everett felt a tremendous lurch of the yard he was on, and almost losing his hold, he felt that it was God's mercy that had saved him from being pitched off into the dark sea to leeward of the ship.

The other men felt the shock, but not so much as he, and shouted to Everett to know what was the matter.

"Some one below jerked the leeward brace and tried to heave me from the yard!" he replied. "I'll report it when I go below."

And he did. But no one had been seen to touch the brace. The man at the helm nearest to it, Mr. Sam Ricketty, said the ship only broached to a bit; no one could go near the after braces without his seeing them.

From the shaded part of the deck Everett watched the man while he told this story, himself unseen, and the lad was satisfied that his life had been attempted by that man, and no one else. But he had no proof of it, and he would not make a charge without proof.

When midnight came, and the second mate's watch had been called, when his relief came up, Everett started down the companion-way of the after-hatch, to go to his berth.

Just as he reached the bottom of the cabin ladder, something dark barely missed his head, and grazing his arm, sunk with a heavy thud into the cabin floor at his feet.

He was almost horror-stricken when he felt that he had escaped death by less than an inch, for a very heavy iron marling-spike had struck point down into the plank, sinking full one-fourth its length into the wood. Had that point struck his head, it would have been instant death.

This time the lad quickly called the attention of Mr. Combs to the danger he had escaped, for that officer was but a half minute behind him.

"That spike never came from the mizzen-top," said the mate. "Some infernal wretch either tried to drop it on your head or threw it at you. Who is there in the crowd that can owe so good a boy as you a deadly grudge? Can you not imagine?"

"I can, sir, but without proof I do not like to accuse any one. The same man, I think, to-night tried to shake me off the to'-gal-lant yard, by jerking on the lee brace when I was out furling the sail."

"Who was it? Confide in me, my good boy, so I can help to watch this enemy."

"Will you keep it from the captain till I get proof enough to warrant my telling him of it?"

"Yes, Everett, I will, and I honor you for not speaking till you are sure."

"Then, sir, the man who has just been relieved from the wheel had a chance to reach that brace, and he had been relieved from the wheel before I started below. I know not why, but I do know he hates me. I have seen it in his eyes a hundred times since we sailed."

"Curse him! if he harmed you the captain would rend him limb from limb. Have you any idea how you have aroused his hate—incurred his anger?"

"Yes, Mr. Combs, I believe he has been hired to kill me, by the only blood relative that I have in the world. That man, Ricketty, came and shipped just before we started. As we swept away from the wharf I saw my cousin, who hates me, on the pier, and he made a sign to some one on this ship. It was not me or the captain he motioned to, and we are the only ones on board that he knew, without it was this new man."

All this time, while those two stood in the light of the cabin lamp talking, a pair of red, fiery eyes were glaring at them through the darkness from above.

Sam Ricketty had heard every word that passed between them.

"The kid is smart, he is," muttered the ruffian. "I've got another to look out for now. All right. I'm enough for 'em both, and there'll be shark bait overboard before long. They're to keep their eyes skinned for me, night and day. Where'll I be all the time, I wonder? They don't know Butcher Sam yet, nor they'll never know till he strikes! I've had all the detectives in York on my track, hot and keen, and doubled on 'em till they didn't know A from B. And a brat of a boy, and a man who only knows how to handle a ship, think they can watch me. Gas! I'm good for a dozen like 'em!"

A cry now from the second mate, now in charge of the watch—an order for a close reef in the topsails, came out sharp and clear, and the man moved away from his listening standpoint. For he knew if the gale increased, all hands would soon be called, for the ship, closed-hauled on a wind, was pitching and plunging like a green hand trying a polka.

In truth, Mr. Combs and Everett had not been in their berths more than an hour, when they heard the captain called, and soon after he went on deck the hoarse cry came sounding through the ship, fore and aft:

"All hands ahoy!—all hands ahoy!"

And both watches worked till the broad light of day came, to get in the flapping sails, reef down what the ship could stand, set up preventer stays, and snug ship for the hurricane, for it was nothing less.

Great surges rolled almost yard-arm high, foam-capped and fearful. Every little while some huge wave would topple in on the decks, sweeping away everything loose, and life-lines were rove around the bulwarks, for officers and men to cling to.

Suddenly a fearful cry was heard.

"Man overboard!"

It came from forward, and as the ship drove madly on through the wild waves, a dark object was seen on a wave-crest, then it went out of sight forever, for no boat or man could live in such a sea as that.

"A man overboard? God help him, for mortal man cannot!" cried the captain, who had got a single glance at the dark object which swept back as the great ship drove madly on. "One hand less, when every one is wanted. Who it is, I'll soon know, when we can call the muster-roll."

All hands were kept on deck for hours when the gale, lessening a very little, gave the captain time to call the muster-roll, before coffee was served to all hands on deck and one watch sent to breakfast.

Pale and anxious, for the storm was his first rough experience, Everett Squires stood near Mr. Combs, while the latter called the roll from the watch-book.

Every name called was promptly answered, until the very last, Sam Ricketty the last man shipped, was named. There was no answer then.

"Thank God!" cried Everett Squires, loud enough only for the captain to hear him, for he stood between the boy and the first mate.

"Amen!" said Mr. Combs.

"How is this?" asked the captain, sternly. "I lose one of my best seamen, and God is thanked for it!"

"Wait till we can both see you alone, sir, in the cabin, and you will say we are right!" said the mate.

"I will wait!" said Captain Harcastle. "Have the starboard watch sent to breakfast, sir—the larboard watch can see to the ship now. Let the second officer, Mr. Reed, get his breakfast too, so as to relieve you when the other watch comes on."

Mr. Reed was called from the fore-castle and sent to the cabin to breakfast. He was an elderly man, but a thorough seaman, and smart as a steel-trap, figuratively speaking.

When the first mate and Everett were called to breakfast by Short Bob, the negro steward of the cabin, an hour later, they found the captain there—at the head of the table in his usual seat. His face wore a gloomy look.

"It's more than twenty years since I've had the bad luck to lose a man overboard!" he said. "With life-lines rove fore and aft, I don't see how a thorough sailor could get overboard. A greenhorn might—but a sailor knows where to take hold and how to hang on."

"It may have been God's mercy, sir, for in heart, on board this ship, and in attempt too, this same Sam Ricketty was a murderer!" said the mate. "I said amen, when Everett here said thank God that he, and not another, was gone."

"What on earth do you mean, sir? Explain yourself," said the captain.

And Mr. Combs did this by going to his stateroom and getting the heaviest marline-spike in the ship. Showing this to the captain, he informed him of all that had occurred.

"De Lor'—DE LOR'!"

It was old Short Bob, the steward, who spoke. He had heard what the mate and Everett said, and his eyes bulged out till their whites were big as Bermuda onions.

"Look you here, Ebony Bob, keep your mouth buttoned about this. Not a word the crew can hear from your lips, or I'll give you the end of an inch rope over your back!" cried the captain.

"De Lord knows I'll nebber say nuffin', mars cap'n. What I meant was dat I seen dat white nigga shake de rope—he leff me at de wheel to do it, but I didn't know what for till now. I'd done gone on deck to look at de wedder, and see if I shouldn't get de sand bags on de tackle."

"Well, keep a close mouth now. I think with Mr. Combs that it was indeed God's mercy that this wretch was singled out to go, for the life of Everett Squires is dear to me as my own!"

"Oh, captain. How can I thank you?"

"By only doing your duty, my lad. Your father was the very best friend I ever had. Through him I got my first ship. A better man never broke bread. I hope to live to see you as good a man, enjoying your own in safety, while this miserable cur, Peter Philpot, goes to old Nick in a cloud of brimstone, with his lean sister hanging to his coat tails."

They now ate a hurried breakfast, and then all went on deck to see how the ship weathered the gale.

CHAPTER III.

THE CAPTURE AND ESCAPE.

Three days and nights, with all snug below and aloft, handled most skillfully, the good ship Tidewater drove before the hurricane, and then it began to slacken, so that more canvas could be put on and the vessel handled more easily. For in all this time one watch had ever to be on the alert, and a good deal of time all hands were on duty. But there were no skulkers and no grumblers.

But there was one mystified person on board. That was the ship's cook—a Norfolk darky, who gloried in the name of Cæsar Augustus Bonaparte Churchill, but who went among the ship's crew by the euphonious title of Doc. Most cooks are called "Doc" aboard ship, anyway.

His trouble was the missing of various edibles which he left in the caboose when he turned in to sleep at night. Cold beef, bread, pork, and even a bottle of rum taken from a private store in his chest, disappeared most mysteriously.

"Rats might take bread and meat, but rats doesn't drink ole Jamaica," he said to himself. "Dere's a bloody tief aboard dis

ship, and if I don't oberhaul and take him to de mast, den Cæsar Augustus Bonaparte Churchill has lost his grip. Dat's suah."

And close and careful was his watch from the time he missed his rum. But for a long time it was in vain that he kept his lookout. Stores vanished from caboose and store-room, when he slept, most mysteriously. At last he went to the captain and told him of his losses.

"We'll fix the thief," said the captain. "I've a trap or two aboard that I had in Bengal when I was out once to catch the cursed coolies that used to rob my former steward. Keep quiet, and I'll take the traps into the caboose and store-room in the dark, and we'll set them. Then the thief, or thieves, will find more than they bargain for. But keep still about it, or you'll warn the rascals off."

"No fear ob me, mars cap'n—I'll keep dark," said the cook.

This ended the colloquy, and the cook gloried in the hope of catching the author of his many losses.

With fine weather, his ship already in a far southern latitude, and well to the east, was making a splendid run. But for an occasional squall y night, the crew had now little to do, for the wind had been fair almost from the start.

On the night which followed the conference between the captain and cook, a cloudy mist, followed by several sharp squalls, made it rather unpleasant. Three times in the first watch Everett Squires had to go aloft to furl, or rest, the mizzen royal. The last time, when on the yard loosing it, the yard was yanked over so suddenly by the weather braces that Everett lost his hold, and, by the merest chance, caught in the topgallant rigging below, after a fall of nearly ten feet.

He knew in an instant, from his former experience, that there had been intention in this mishap. As the sail was loose when it happened, he waited until it was sheeted home, and then went down and told Mr. Combs what had occurred.

The latter examined the mizzen top-gallant braces as soon as possible. He soon found out that dastardly work had been attempted. The lee-brace had been cut with a knife before the weather-brace was touched.

"The wretch Ricketty, must have had a confederate!" said Mr. Combs. "My dear boy, you shall never be sent aloft again in my watch without I can see every brace and halliard and who is at them. To-night it is as dark as a brace of black cats, and no one could be detected, no matter what he did. We'll let the captain know of this in the morning."

In the morning there was a surprise for the captain and cook, who were alone in the trap-setting secret. In the provision-room, which, though locked as before, had been opened by some skillful hand, a trap was found sprung, and near it the thumb and forefinger of a man—large, coarse, and dirty. The trap, sharp and strong, had done its duty, but the thief, terrified and bleeding, had fled.

The captain, on being informed of the discovery, traced the blood marks to the forehold, in which was stored a great cargo of boxes and casks.

A muster of the crew showed no mutilated hands among them. In a second a new thought and a true one flew into the captain's mind.

"The man overboard was a dummy—a false figure stuffed out!" he said. "I might have suspected it before. When I remember now we saw no motion, heard no outcry after that one shout, 'Man overboard!' The murderous wretch, Sam Ricketty, is still on board. We must make instant search; he is in the forehold."

"Yes, sir; he tried last night to throw Everett Squires from the mizzen and top-gallant yard again, and nearly succeeded," said Mr. Combs.

And he told how narrowly the boy had escaped the second time, and showed where the severed brace had been temporarily knotted, not spliced, by his own hand.

"Had he succeeded, he should swing in an hour from the same yard-arm!" cried the captain, wild with anger. "Take two well-armed men and hunt him out, Mr. Combs. If you see him raise a hand to resist, shoot him dead in a second!"

"Ay, ay, sir," said the mate. "Steward, light three lanterns."

It was easy to trace the man from the store-room by the tell-tale stream of blood. The men had not been in the forehold ten minutes, before the cry came out:

"Here he is!"

And a few seconds later, white and bleached with his close quarters in the dark, stifling hold, so faint with loss of blood as to be hardly able to stand, the wretch, Sam Ricketty, was dragged out to the sight of officers and crew, who were now told of his diabolical attempts to murder the universal favorite—Everett Squires.

Had not the crew been under perfect discipline, they would have torn the wretch limb from limb, or hurled him a living victim to the sharks which swarmed in those waters. But the

captain bade them wait for justice, for in double irons he would hold the villain until he could return to the port from whence he sailed, and there try him for his vile attempts at murder and the conspiracy of which the paper found on him, signed by Peter Philpot, was ample proof.

So, almost dead, and apparently cowed into utter humility, the wretch was ironed and placed aft under guard where one of the watch could always keep an eye on him—in a storage recess in the wheel-house, where at night the binnacle light shone full upon him.

The good ship Tidewater, in spite of all storms and mishaps, had made the voyage into far eastern waters with less loss of time than Captain Harcastle had ever known before. Only a few more weeks, if good fortune still prevailed, he would land his valuable cargo, take in another, and with an iron chest full of freight money, find himself homeward bound.

They were in the center of the Malayan Archipelago, when a change, dark and fearful, came to cloud their fortunes on board the gallant ship. Sumatra on one hand, Malacca on the other, with piratical proas all around them, was no desirable position with a good breeze blowing to carry them through into safer waters.

But when, with night drawing on, the wind deserted them, and they saw a fleet of armed Malay proas sweeping toward them under oars, the prospect was far from cheering.

But with a brave captain, and officers full of courage to support him, the crew did not falter. The brass carronade, which served as a pilot-gun, was run aft and loaded heavily with musket-balls. There were muskets and cutlasses on board of sufficient number to arm all the crew; the captain had a repeating rifle and two large revolving pistols; the mates were armed in the same way, and Everett Squires had two large dueling pistols which his father had owned, and with which he had practiced until he could take a man's eye at thirty paces every time he fired.

And thus armed, with every sail set, praying for a breeze to carry them beyond the reach of the murderous pirates in chase, the officers and crew of the Tidewater waited, determined, if fight must come, to battle to the last, for they knew there was no mercy in him who raises a Malay creese.

The captain was standing aft, near the wheel-house, with Mr. Combs by his side, and Everett, our young hero, close at hand, when a shot fired from the nearest proa, evidently from a long and heavy gun, struck so near the ship's quarter that the spray struck the boy in the face as he bent over the rail.

"Avast heaving!" he cried, with a laugh.

"Good on your head, youngster—you'll do!" cried the captain, tickled with the boy's cool courage. "But they've nearly got our range, and our gun will not carry half the distance. And there are one hundred men on that proa if there are ten, and the rest are large and well-manned. But we'll fight them to the last—eh, boy?"

"Yes, sir—and whip them, too!" cried Everett. "I feel it in my heart, sir. I never felt half so sure of pulling through and going back to settle with that rascal, Peter Philpot, as I do now. See—look at the water, sir. There is a breeze on our beam which will strike us before it does the proas."

"Young eyes are sharp eyes. The boy is right. All hands tend sheets and braces!" cried the captain, as he sprang himself to take the helm, which had been left while the ship was becalmed and motionless. "Look to the sails, and see that every one draws, Mr. Combs," he added.

And, with three stunning cheers, the crew sprang to their stations to brace up the yards and flatten in sheets, as the wind came sighing over the hot waters.

Just as the ship, heeling to the breeze, began to dash forward, a shot from the leading proa passed in over the rail, took off a corner of the wheel-house, and went on its way, through main and foresail, into the sea beyond, barely missing the masts, and without hurting a man.

"Are you hurt, captain?" cried Everett, bounding forward, and entering the wheel-house.

"Not a scratch, boy—not a scratch. But it was a close call. Thank God for the wind. We'll be out of their range in a few minutes. Mr. Combs, let the men lie down—there is no use of needless exposure. We are all in trim now."

"Heavens, sir!—where is the prisoner? Where is Sam Ricketty?" cried Everett.

There on the deck lay the irons, but the man was gone.

An instant later, when search was made, a dark speck was seen in the water far astern. A look with the spy-glass told in a moment who it was. During the absence of the helmsman, the skillful thief and villain had slipped his manacles and dropped over the side unseen.

"Quick! Lethim have the contents of the big gun. He must not escape if we can help it." cried the captain, putting Mr.

Reed at the helm and sighting the gun himself, while Mr. Combs watched the fugitive with the spy-glass.

Ready in a second, the captain fired and waited in breathless anxiety to hear if he had slain the treacherous villain.

"He dove down at the flash—your charge struck the water over him—he rises unhurt, he signals the proa—they will take him on board for we cannot turn back," groaned the mate.

"The ship is rid of him at any rate," said the captain. "Blow, good breeze, blow, and take us out of this infernal scrape."

The pirates, busy in rounding to, to pick up the fugitive, did not fire another shot until he was on board, and then the gallant Tidewater was out of range. The shot they sent did not even sprinkle our hero, who stood aft with the captain watching the proas now so fast falling astern.

The fellow must have old Satan at his side to help him," said the captain, as the fins of shark after shark were seen darkening the waters over which the ship sped. "If one of us went over the side we'd be tackled by those ravenous monsters before we could make a half-dozen strokes for life."

"The man that is born to be hung, mars cap'n, will never drown or be eat up with a 'gator or a shark. Dat man will hang as sure as I'm black."

It was Short Bob who pronounced this idea, and he did it with a solemnity worthy the occasion.

"I wish I'd pisoned him while I had the chance," said the subtle Cæsar Augustus Bonaparte, who had come aft to ask if he could serve out supper to the crew.

"Give the men supper, and do it quickly. I do not like the looks of that cloud-bank to the windward of us. Instead of a decent capful of wind, we are going to have a gale, and that in the worst part of the channel. Hurry up, Bob, bring my supper up here in the wheel-house. I shall not leave the deck."

"Mine, too, Bob," said Mr. Combs. "Everett, go down for yours, and bring up the chart on my cot when you come. I want to see what is around us."

Everett always obeyed orders. He staid and ate his supper, but he was not long about it. When he came on deck with the chart, both the captain and Mr. Combs examined it anxiously.

The sky was darkening every instant, yet sail was kept on the gallant craft, for the proas were yet in sight. But when the wind came out in fitful gusts and the light spars began to bend and creak, the light sails were ordered in, and our hero was aloft doing his duty.

Suddenly, just as the darkness of night was closing in on them, he saw from aloft a phosphorescent light close at hand on the lee bow.

"Breakers ahead!" he shouted at the top of his voice.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BUTLER BOY.

When Samantha Philpot discovered that she could do nothing to prevent the departure of Everett and Captain Harcastle, she at once began to vent her spite upon Freddie Butler, an orphan, who had been placed under her tender care. The old virago had beaten the boy in the most brutal manner, and left him, while she went to have an interview with her brother. Bridget Dooley, the cook, found the boy, and did all she could for him. Fred told Bridget he would run away, and try to find Everett, who had on more than one occasion screened him from the savage onslaughts of the amiable Samantha.

Some time after this, as the worthy couple, Peter and Samantha, were having a discussion relative to the affairs of Everett, and the plot between Peter and Sam Ricketty, Bridget burst in upon them with a startling cry!

"Oh, missis, the Butler boy has gone!"

"What, dead?" shrieked the old maid. "I shall be hung."

When Bridget Dooley said the Butler boy was gone, Samantha's first and only thought was that the boy, whom she had so cruelly beaten, was dead from the effects of her violence.

"I said he was gone, ma'am—I didn't say he was dead. I went up to his room to give him some more toast and tay, as you said I might, ma'am, and he wasn't there! But here is a bit o' writin' I found there. I can't rade it, but maybe you can."

In her wild fear, the wretched old maid snatched the paper from Bridget's hands, and read it aloud.

It was a poor scrawl, but it had a world of terrible meaning in it.

"I've made up my mind to run away before I'll let you kill me. I know all about your plan to have Everett Squires killed, so you can get his property, but I'm going to save him, see if I don't. I hate you both—old knock-kneed Peter and dried-up Samantha! So there, now. I'm off, and you'll never see me again till I bring Everett Squires back, or get you two hung for having him killed. So there, now!"

"FREDDIE BUTLER."

"The audacious villain! I'll strangle him!" yelled Peter Philpot.

"I'll tear his eyes out, so I will!" shrieked Samantha.

"You haven't got him here, missis, to tear at," said Bridget, quietly.

"Oh, what a fool I was to read that letter before her!" groaned Miss Philpot.

"Yes, you are as big a jack as I am, my dried-up sister," said Peter, with a sneer.

"Take that for your impudence," she cried, hitting him a slap in the face with the flat of her hand, which sent him reeling across the room.

"You hit hard, you she-devil," he yelled, "but I'll be even with you, if I have to murder you."

"Howly saints! I'll lave this house widin an hour," cried Bridget, in horror. "It's nothin' but murther I hear on every hand. First swate Masther Everett, the nicest boy in the wide world, is sent out to be killed. Then the Butler boy gets away to save the life of him, and now yon lean divil is a talkin' of killin' his sister, an' she a heretic with no chance o' salvation. Give me my wages at wunst, d'ye hear? I'll not stay here another hour. Give me my wages, I say, or I'll be off to the police coort wid the whole story."

"Fool, see what you have done! If we let her go, we'll both be in prison within an hour," whispered Peter, huskily, his face of an ashen white.

"Leave the room! I'll see to her," gasped Samantha. "You threatened my life, and she heard you. Here, give me your pocket-book first. You've carried the money too long, with no brains in your head."

Peter handed over the pocket-book. He was the under dog now. He knew if there was any getting out of his present scrape, he was not the man to do it—his sister had the brains and grit. So, with an empty pocket-book and a sulky look, he went up stairs to solace himself with a goblet of old brandy. Like many another fool, he thought he could drown fear, remorse, everything in the strong fluid—instead of steeping his senses into sottish helplessness with it, as he now proceeded to do.

"Bridget, good Bridget!" commenced Samantha, the moment she was alone with the girl.

"Pay me my money, if I'm a good Bridget, or ye'll find me out worse than any divil that iver got drunk at a babbie's wake. Pay me my money, I say."

"I will, dear Bridget—I will in a minute; as soon as I can count it out," she answered, examining the pocket-book. "Why, what on earth has Peter done with the money? He had two or three hundred dollars in it last night, and there's barely a hundred now."

"There's Masther Everett's blood-money gone out of it, most like," said Bridget. "My wages come to but ninety dollars—pay it up at wunst!"

"There are ten ten-dollar bills, dear Bridget. Now be good, and stay here to help me. I can't get along without you."

"Will ye double my wages?"

"Yes, if you stay, and be discreet."

"I'll stay, thin, if ye'll throw yer ould cowhide away, an' not larrup the childers any more; an' ye must have fish an' eggs for me ivery fast day."

"All right, Bridget; you shall have your own way."

"Howly saints be praised! The childers will go wild when they see the change. I'll not wather their milk any more. It is wathery enough when it gits here onyway."

Bridget put the money in her pocket, and Samantha went up stairs to find her brother in the act of swallowing his second bumper of brandy.

Knocking the glass from his hand, she screamed out:

"Yon senseless-hog! Here you are getting drunk when you should be off in search of that Butler boy. If he gits off, knowing all he does, you are ruined. I have hushed Bridget up with a hundred dollars. There is your empty pocket-book. Go to the bank and fill it. Then bring it here. I'll give you enough out of it to hunt that boy up with before he gits off, and he must be brought back where we can keep an eye on him."

"If I get my eyes on him, I'll kill him."

"Hush! The very walls may have ears behind them. I wish he and Bridget were both dead—then we'd be safer than we are; but we must do the best we can. Keep sober now, or it will be the worse for you."

"What can a feller do, when his mind is troubled, as mine is?" whined Peter.

"Keep sober, I tell you, and follow my directions. I'll carry you through, or sink with you."

"That's kind, Samantha. I'll try," he said, putting on his hat, and taking up his cane.

"Don't be gone long to the bank. While you are gone, I'll think and plan out where you're to go to find the boy. Most like, he'll go to the office of the shipping merchant that sent the Tidewater out, the very first thing, to learn where she was going."

"You are right, Samantha. I'll go to the bank, and be back in twenty minutes. Mayn't I take just one more drink, to kind o' nerve me up?"

"Not now, Peter; not now. I'll keep this key now, and serve you out what I think you really need, till you are straight. Then you drink no more."

And she locked the sideboard, and put the key in her pocket.

CHAPTER V.

ARRIVAL AT SINGAPORE.

"Hard up the helm! Let fly the after sheets!" shouted Captain Hardcastle, the instant he heard the shrill warning cry of Everett Squires from aloft. "Square the fore and main yards!" he added, as the ship wore swiftly around under the pressure of helm and head-sails.

It was scarce a minute, yet, with the breakers hissing and roaring under their lee—saved by almost a fathom's distance—the good ship shot away into deeper waters. Officers and crew breathlessly thanked the sharp-eyed boy who had saved them from destruction, for the reef over which the huge surges broke, far from the islands, would have torn the stout ship to splinters had she struck.

And if a man had been saved from wreck and dissolution there, it would have been to fall into the hands of merciless savages—pirates by trade and nature.

"Everett, my brave lad, it is a hard night's duty, but your eyes are the best in the ship; go up to the fore-top, and keep a lookout ahead for us. We have a hard channel to work through."

The wind, now driving ahead, had increased very much, and sail was reduced until beating to windward under three close-reefed topsails, fore-staysail, and spanker, the ship had all she could carry, running at times almost lee-rail under.

Then the captain, sighting the land, found to his dismay and regret that a strong current was setting through the Malacca Straits, and that he had not gained three leagues in real distance all night.

"Go through we must!" he muttered. "Mr. Combs, shake out a reef in the topsails and put the mainsail on her. Everett, I'll send up your relief at once. Come down and get your coffee, my brave, good boy."

With increased sail the good ship groaned from truck to keelson; every timber creaked; but she tore madly through the waters and began to gain on the land, to the delight of her noble captain.

After breakfast, Everett, who had not slept all night, was advised to turn in, but he would not. Taking a spy-glass, he scanned the islands on either hand with deep interest, their lofty palms and flowering trees seemed so beautiful to him.

Everett had never asked or known until that day whither they were bound, but he heard, at dinner, the captain telling Mr. Combs how sorry he was that they had to touch at Singapore before going into the China Sea, for the principal cargo was to be landed at Canton.

Why Singapore was to be dreaded he did not know, nor was he a boy to ask questions except in his studies, but he heard the captain say that there was not an honest man, native growth, to be met at Singapore, and he would be glad to be well out of the hated port.

Bravely the good ship was worked, and the wind failing a little, under more sail, the Singapore light was made before midnight. But now the ship's head had to be hove off shore, the wind lessening so fast that the captain said the gale was broken, and they would be apt to have a land breeze to work into port in the morning.

In a little while the ship lay in the Singapore roads, with lighters alongside ready to remove some opium when the merchant to whom it was consigned brought a permit for its landing, paid the freight, and gave his receipt.

This occupied but an hour or two, and then, rejoicing, Captain Hardcastle had his anchor weighed, and made sail for Canton. To get away from Singapore was happiness just then.

CHAPTER VI.

PETER FINDS THE BUTLER BOY.

Peter soon returned to Samantha with his pocket-book replenished. She took out of it all but fifty dollars, and then told him to set out in search of the Butler boy. He knew too much—he must be found and brought back at all hazards.

"Jest a leetle drop before I go, Samantha! Jest a leetle to stiddy my nerves. That lick you gave me in the chops a'most sent me wild. My head aches yet."

"I'll give you one glass, Peter, on condition you don't drink a drop anywhere else."

"I vow I'll not do it, Samantha! I'm afeard to drink in the saloons. They pison their drink in some of 'em, I've heard tell."

Samantha unlocked the sideboard, poured him out a reasonable drink, and handed it to him.

He drank it, smacked his lips, and said:

"That was good! Uncle David knew what liquor was, and this is more'n fifty years old—us old as you be, most, Samantha."

"Fool! you know I ain't forty yet. Go and do that business, and do it right, or I'll snatch every hair out of your head."

Peter Philpot went at once to the counting-house of Sheed, Sweetbrier & Co., the owners with Captain Hardcastle of the good ship Tidewater. Peter had not a prepossessing look. There was no business style in gait, expression, dress, or action. He looked, as he was, mean, low and vulgar. Therefore, when he entered the counting-room of the great firm, which owned over one hundred and five ships, many of them built by the firm, the head porter coolly asked him what he wanted there.

"To see the head of the firm, if you please, sir," said Peter, taking off his hat and bowing humbly.

"He is away in the country—tell me what you want and I'll know who to send you to."

"If you please, sir, this is the house in which the ship Tidewater belongs?"

"Yes, but that ship is off to Canton in the China Seas."

"Yes, sir, I know that. But haven't you other ships bound to the same place?"

"Yes. The Highflyer, a thousand tonner, and a clipper, too, sails at high tide to-morrow morning. That makes by sunrise."

"Ah! and her crew all shipped?"

"I reckon so. The shipping-clerk will know. You don't want to ship, do you? They don't take greenhorns on long voyages."

"No, sir—no, I don't want to ship, but a young boy—a lad between thirteen and fourteen years old—has run away from me, and I think he'll go on the ship that follows the Tidewater. I will give fifty dollars to find that boy."

"Cash down?"

"Yes; I have it in my pocket now."

"The boy's name—what was it, and his description? Tell me, and I'll see what I can do for you."

"The real name of the boy was Freddie Butler; he may have changed it, sir, if he has shipped. He is thirteen, I think—going on fourteen years—over five feet high, a freckled face, a scar on his right cheek, and a crooked finger, the middle one on his left hand. He had on an old pepper-and-salt suit, like this I wear, only the trousers were patched behind and before. That's as near as I can describe him, sir—oh, no—he was very lean, had sharp features, blue eyes, and brown hair."

The porter, who had taken all this down in a note-book, said:

"Take a seat here by the door, sir, in this chair. I'll go and find the shipping-clerk, who has a list of the crew, and come back and let you know."

Peter sat down. He saw men come and go, all too busy, to give a glance at him, and he was glad to get out of the way, for he might be run over, they came and went so fast.

In a few minutes the porter returned.

"Just such a boy as you describe has shipped to-day on the Highflyer as cabin-boy," he said. "But he has shipped under the name of Ollie Squires."

"Squires—if he has taken that name he is my boy, sure. Can't we get him?"

"I think so, since there is no advance paid to him. Can you show a right to claim him?"

"Why, yes!" said Peter. "He was sent to me to board and school by his father or step-father, which is all the same. I've letters in my pocket to show that. And I'm responsible for him. If he runs away, it gets me in a scrape. Don't you see?"

"If I see that fifty dollars, I think we can get him if you go with me aboard the ship to claim him."

"Here it is, sir, and it is yours if you'll go with me and get the boy."

"All right, my man, all right. I'll get leave, and we'll go for the ship. She is anchored off the Battery now—all ready, as I told you, to sail in the morning."

The sight of the cash had made the porter zealous in Peter's cause.

Aft, in the cabin of the clipper Highflyer, in the presence of Captain Cobe Gregory, her commander, stood a pale-faced, blue-eyed boy, tall and slender, yet quite young. He was dressed in

a new suit of navy flannel, and looked as if time and good care would make a man of him.

He was telling his new captain of the terrible persecutions and cruelties which had driven him into running away from the boarding-school, to which his heartless step-father had sent him because it was *cheap*, when through the cabin-window he saw a small row-boat coming from shore with two men in it.

The boy trembled from head to foot when he saw the man in the stern of this boat, and he cried out:

"Oh, captain! There comes Peter Philpot, the man I had to board with. He is after me—I know he is, and I had rather die than go back. In mercy, save me—do not let him take me, for I'll be whipped to death."

"Be quiet, lad, and fear not—he shall not take you from this ship," said Captain Gregory. "You are on my books, and you shall stay there. Come on deck with me, and we'll send him back with a flea in his ear."

Brave in the thought that he had one to stand by him, the boy brightened up in an instant. But he deemed that an explanation would be better now than thereafter. So he said:

"I shipped under another name, sir, thinking it would help me to find Everett Squires, whom this villain has hired a man to murder, so he can get his property. My real name is Freddie Butler."

"Butler? I had a dear friend once—General Dan Butler, of Delaware!" cried the captain.

"That was my father's name, sir, and he lived in Delaware. But he died, and mother died, and my step-father, who married mother when she was a widow only two years, sent me off out of his way, for he had his own children that he liked better."

"Why, my boy, you are as dear to me as a kid of my own household. This will not set you back any. Come on deck and see me send that cur ashore."

Boldly now the long-abused Butler boy followed the captain on deck. It had already been reached by the porter and Mr. Peter Philpot, who, as soon as the captain was in sight, opened his weak battery.

"I've come after a runaway rascally boy, who has shipped under the name of Ollie Squires on this vessel," squeaked Peter, trembling, as he met a dark, foreboding frown on the face of the captain.

"No such boy here," said the captain, sternly. "When rascals sneak about my ship I generally kick them first, and then toss them overboard."

Peter looked at the massive frame of the young captain, and began to wish he was on shore. But as the Butler boy stood in plain sight, he mustered up enough of spunk to say:

"There he is now! He belongs to my school, and I can prove it. The rascal ran away from my house."

"Rascal? You infernal, dyed-in-the-wool white nigger—you disgrace to brutes—you abortion of humanity, how dare you call this young gentleman, Master Fred Butler, a son of a dear old friend of mine, a rascal! Rascal! Dirty rascal that you are, get out of my ship."

The captain now commenced kicking the frightened cur, but he kicked him right toward Fred.

"Knock him down with a belaying-pin, Fred, if he offers to touch you."

"Oh, please, sir, don't—don't! I'm not fat and you hurt!" squealed Peter, while Fred danced in glee over the quarter-deck. "That man, the porter of your house on shore, brought me off."

"He did? Well, I'll have him discharged for it before I sail. Get into your boat, you villain, and pick up that dirty dog before he drowns. I want him to live long enough to be hung."

As he spoke, the captain caught Peter up in his strong grip and threw him over the side of the ship into the water.

With a gurgling cry the wretch went under, but the porter caught him as he came up, and with the boat drifting up the tide pulled him in.

"Hand over that fifty, quick, before the bills are water-soaked!" cried the porter.

"I'll not do it. I haven't got the boy," gasped Peter.

"Then out you go to drown, you low-lived cheat. If I'm to be discharged for you, I'll have the satisfaction of knowing you are done for."

The porter clutched Peter in his strong hands to heave him out of the boat, but the coward wilted in a second.

"Here's the money. I can't swim," he groaned.

And he handed over five ten-dollar bills just a little dampened by the brief immersion, the thick folds of the wallet saving them.

The porter put the bills in his pocket and sullenly pulled to the Whitehall dock, where he had hired the boat.

Punctually on the turn of the ebb tide, next morning, the good ship Highflyer got under way, and now Freddie Butler, under

his own name on the ship's papers, shipped not as cabin-boy, but exactly as Everett Squires had done, to do duty below and aloft, while he lived in the cabin and messed with the captain, went to sea the happiest child on earth.

When the good ship went rolling and pitching over the great seas, and with a strong west wind filling every sail and carrying her swiftly on her course, the boy was not even sea-sick.

Starvation had kept him thin and his blood pure—what was left in him—therefore there was no bile in his stomach to feed sea-sickness on. It is a hard preventative, but if my sea-going reader desires, let him try it.

The ship was very fast, the wind fair, Captain Cobe Gregory every inch a sailor and this his second voyage as captain. When he heard the whole story of Freddie; how Everett Squires had gone to sea with his old commander and friend, Captain Hardcastle, and how a murderous wretch was also on board hired to kill him, Captain Cobe swore he would overtake the Tidewater before she got to Canton. If the poor boy was dead, his murderer could not and should not escape.

It is useless for me to describe even in outline the ordinary incidents of a swift, successful voyage, but I will say in brief, that Freddie Butler was quite a sailor when the Highflyer stood into Singapore roads to land an invoice of opium, consigned to Wells, Fleet & Co., the same merchants with whom Captain Hardcastle had communicated.

The first question asked by Captain Gregory was when the Tidewater sailed from Singapore, for he knew he had to stop there to land opium.

"Yesterday morning!" said the consignee. "She had a fair wind and all her kites set when she went off!"

"No matter for that—I'll be at her stern before she drops anchor in Canton Bay."

"I've a man in the lighter," said the merchant, "who wants to work his way to Canton. He is an able-bodied seaman, and says he was wrecked down the coast."

"Bring him aboard. I'm a hand short—a man sick below," said Captain Gregory.

A minute later, a coarse, rough-looking man, whose face was full of small-pox pits, whose nose had been broken out of shape long before, stood on the deck before him.

CHAPTER VII.

ALMOST A MURDER.

The captain was in too much of a hurry to think of looks, though it was a hard face he gazed at when he asked:

"Can you hand, reef, and steer?"

"Ay, ay, sir! I've been at sea, boy and man, over thirty years. What I can't do aboard ship isn't worth doing, sir."

"Very well. I'll try you to Canton, and if you suit, will ship you for the home voyage if you wish. Go to Mr. Peters, my first officer; he'll take your name and rate you A. B. on the books."

Fred Butler intuitively disliked the man from his very first glance at him. He followed him when he went to get his name entered, and heard him give it as Sam Sloan. The boy had never heard the name before, neither had he heard of Sam Ricketty, yet the latter stood before him.

"Sam Slowun, you'll have to be a fast 'un to suit our skipper," said Mr. Peters, who was a funny man when he was in a good humor, and an ugly one, indeed, when the wind of nature set the other way. "He likes to see men jump when an order is given; so do I."

"All right, sir. You'll see I know my duty, and can do it," said the new-comer.

"Very well. I'll put you in my watch. Take the helm when you hear the starboard watch called, relieving old Hart, who is at it now. He isn't good for much at the wheel or anywhere else when there is wind enough to fill the canvas. He is lazier than a fat hog—he'll hardly crawl to the trough at feeding time."

"You'll find me A 1 at feed and work, too, sir. I've been half-starved on rice and curry among the red heathen ashore."

"You do look thin. Go to the caboose and tell the doctor I sent you there to get a hearty lunch. Then come to my stateroom just before eight bells, and I'll give you a glass of grog."

"Thankee, sir. I'll be there."

When the man started for the caboose, Freddie Butler, who had been watching his every look and motion, and listened to every word he said, turned to the first mate.

"Mr. Peters," said he, "if I was grown up and on a jury, and that man was being tried for murder, I'd vote to hang him without evidence. His looks are enough. I never saw a more wicked face!"

"Sho, child! A man can't help his looks. He is just as God made him."

"No, he isn't, sir! God never broke his face, or gave that ugly gash in the cheek. His eyes look right through you, and I felt a cold chill run over me every time he looked at me. I'll hate him—I know I shall!"

Had he known that Sam had halted behind the mast and listened to every word he said, the boy might not have spoken so plainly and so loud.

"I'll be the death of that kid before I leave this ship!" muttered the wretch, as he slid away, keeping the mast between him and the eyes which had read his true character so well.

"You should never hate anybody for their looks!" said the mate. "Now, here am I, Den Peters, as ugly as a crooked pin. Do you hate me?"

"No, Mr. Peters. You are not very handsome, but you are good, and so full of fun you keep every one in good humor. That man looks as cross as a bull-dog."

"He is no beauty, it is true, lad, but he may turn out better than he samples. We'll keep a weather-eye on him, anyway, and if he don't walk a straight seam he'll get me and the old man down on him sure. Then he'll be worse off than a toad on a hot shovel."

The mate always called the captain "old man," though the former was the older of the two. It is a custom aboard ship. How it came I know not.

Sam called for his grog on time, and took it with a "thankee, sir," that goes right to the marrow.

This time Peters took a close look at what he called his "phizz-mahogany," and he had to acknowledge to himself if physiognomy amounted to anything, a man with such an expression, such eyes, etc., could not be a good man.

But when he saw him at the wheel and saw how well he steered ship, he knew he was a good seaman—far ahead of old Hart, who had let the Highflyer yaw about like a mad bull in a pasture lot, or a big-footed country doctor running for a new patient.

And so he reported to the captain, when that officer asked him how he liked the new man:

"He is as good at the helm as any man in the ship," he said. "And steering is our best hold for a quick passage."

"You are right, Mr. Peters," said the captain, pleasantly.

Under all sail, the Highflyer dashed into the China Sea with a speed which even satisfied her fast young captain. The wind was fair, but it ran into squalls almost too often, and the second night out from Singapore was especially dark and nasty.

The first mate, Mr. Peters, had the watch from eight to midnight; the new man, Sam Sloan, had the last two hours of the watch at the helm, and all hands in the watch were busy taking in sail for squalls, and loosing them when they went by.

Young Butler had the mizzen royal to look out for, and when that was finished, he helped a couple of light men on the mizzen top-gallant sail.

It was very dark when the larboard watch came on deck to relieve the other; but the wind blew fresh and steady, so, as one watch came up the other went down.

Freddie Butler was descending the cabin ladder to go to his stateroom, and Mr. Peters was just behind him, when something whizzed close in front of Mr. Peters, from overhead, and he saw Freddie fall with a cry of agony, upon the cabin floor at the foot of the ladder.

Springing down, he raised the boy in his arms, and carried him in under the swinging lamp in the center of the cabin, crying out to the captain as he did so, the latter being asleep in his stateroom.

When Captain Gregory rushed out of his room, Mr. Peters was trying to draw a huge sharp-pointed marline-spike from the poor-boy's shoulder, in which it had deeply sunk—so deeply, in truth, that it was all the strong mate could do to get it out.

The terrible missile had actually grazed his ear on its descent. A half an inch inward and it would have killed him instantly.

"Who was above with the marline-spike?" cried the captain, as he bade the steward bring lint and his medicine-chest.

"No one!" said Mr. Peters. "There was not a soul in the mizzen-top, or on the poop-deck. This thing was dropped on purpose to kill the boy. There has been no work aft in which a marline-spike was used, and I saw this very one in the sail-room just before dark, when I went there to get a set of studding-sail halliards. I know it by the knot in the halliard—I made it myself."

"Merciful Heaven! Who could have meant to kill the poor boy? I must stop this bleeding, or he'll die anyway."

The steward was on hand in a minute with a roll of lint and the medicine-chest. In this there was a powerful styptic—a preparation of iron. Dipping lint in this, the captain used it freely, and the brave boy, though suffering terribly, bore up nobly in his pain. But he lost so much blood before it could be stopped,

that he was barely able to whisper when he was stripped and put to bed.

Instant inquiry failed to bring anything like proof of how or by whom the wicked wound was given.

The mate thought of what the boy had said about the new man, but he kept still on the point, for he had no proof that the man had the least ill-will to the boy, no evidence that he had touched the marline-spike—but one thing, indeed, on which he could ground a breath of suspicion.

Sam, just relieved from the wheel, must have been aft when this occurred, for he had not had time to get forward. He could have done it. The other man could not have left the helm a second without the ship broaching to, for she carried a hard weather-helm. And these two, except the second officer, who was above suspicion, were the only men aft that Mr. Peters knew to be there.

As soon as the boy was made as comfortable as could be, the mate went forward with a lantern and inspected the bunks in which his watch slept. All the watch had gone to bed, but all with one exception were yet wide awake.

That exception was Sam Sloan. He seemed to be asleep, snoring quite naturally. But Mr. Peters believed him to be shamming. And he made up his mind from that moment that the man had tried to murder the poor boy, and he determined thenceforward to watch him night and day, or have him watched. He too began to think there was murder in his looks.

But he also determined to keep it to himself, until he could detect the man in some overt act and carry proof right home to him.

It was a close call for the boy, with such a terrible wound and the weather intensely hot. There was no surgeon on the ship, but the captain and his mates had had a great deal of experience in sickness and surgery and this stood them well in hand now.

Watched carefully day and night, no neglect permitted. Sustained by gentle stimulants and broth, it was hoped the boy could be carried through until the ship reached Canton, where good surgical help could be had, for there were always British or American men-of-war in port.

When Freddie was able to talk and alone with Mr. Peters, he told him he was sure Sam Sloan had dropped the heavy spike, trying to drive it through his head.

"Because," said he, "I had seen him look at me with such an expression of hate, that I shuddered under it!"

"He carries himself very straight now," said Mr. Peters. "He knows he is watched, and I think fears to show out his real nature. But I told him we all thought you would die, and though he tried to hide it, I saw he was glad."

"I hope to live to see him hung!" said the boy. "If I do get well, I am afraid I never will have the use of my left arm. It is powerless now and feels so numb."

"Ob, keep your spirits, Freddie, you'll pull through—we will be in Canton to-morrow, and then—ah! what in thunder does that mean?"

A bullet, fired through a port side in the cabin, grazed the mate's temple when he spoke. Who ever fired it was in the channel or mizzen rigging.

Bleeding, but not hurt enough to disable him a second, the mate rushed on deck and sprang to the spot whence the shot had been fired. A ship's pistol, still smoking, touched his feet. He sprang down to the edges of the mizzen rigging. But no man was there. And the strictest search could not prove the shot on any one. Sloan and all the watch that he belonged to were in bed and asleep—or seemed to be.

The captain was furious at this bold attempt to murder his chief officer. He offered a thousand dollars reward to detect the culprit, so as to bring him to justice.

The mate and Freddie both believed they knew the man, but there was no proof. And brave as both were, they knew an assassin in the dark had ever an advantage.

When the clipper Highflyer reached Canton, she was but a single day behind the Tidewater, which yet lay in the outer anchorage.

Freddie Butler had gained enough to be able to sit up, and the captain told him as soon as they went to discharge cargo he would have him taken on shore to the coolest, healthiest quarters he could find.

"Please, sir, will you send a boat to the Tidewater to find out for me if Everett Squires is yet alive?"

This was the first thought of the brave, true boy.

"A boat is coming from the Tidewater, sir, with Captain Hardcastle steering it!" said Mr. Peters, entering the cabin just as Freddie made his request.

"Receive and send him right down here; I am busy dressing Freddie's shoulder," said Captain Gregory.

To Freddie's wonder and delight, in less than three minutes

later, Captain Hardcastle entered the cabin with Everett Squires in his company.

Everett almost shouted with joy when he saw his old friend and schoolmate, and only for his being in bed, with that ghastly wound only partially healed, would have hugged the very breath out of him.

"How was this boy hurt?" asked Captain Hardcastle, looking with an eye of pity on the young sufferer.

"A heavy marline-spike was dropped on him, point down, as he descended the cabin stairs one dark night, evidently with an intent to kill him," said Captain Gregory.

"Heavens and earth! Our friend, Everett Squires here, barely escaped death from just such a weapon, thrown in the same way by a murderous villain named Sam Ricketty, who tried twice to throw him off the mizzen top-gallant yard-arm!"

"Where is the wretch now?" asked Mr. Peters.

"We don't know. He escaped out of irons just before we got into Singapore Roads, jumped overboard, and swam to a piratical Malay proa, which was in chase of us. That night we beat off one proa and sunk another. The wretch was on board the proa that we beat off—we heard his voice. Whether he was killed or not we could not tell. We made bad work for the most of the bloody pirates!"

"Had this man gray-green eyes, a broken nose, a pock-marked face, and a deep scar on one cheek, a big, burly frame, and red, bushy hair?" asked Mr. Peters.

"You have described him to a dot," said Captain Hardcastle. "His name is Sam Ricketty, and no more murderous rascal runs unhung!"

"He shipped with us at Singapore as Sam Sloan, and is on board this ship now. I believe he tried to murder Freddie here, and that I may thank him for this scar on my temple from a bullet fired in the night through that port. I always thought it, and so did Freddie, but we kept still waiting for proof."

"Go on deck, Mr. Peters, and have him put in irons instantly. He will not escape now; if I see an attempt made I'll hang him from the yard-arm on my own responsibility—the vile hell-hound!"

Peters went on deck, and so did Everett Squires, to identify the villain. His name—the new one—was called all over the ship, but he could not be found. A search through the hold was fruitless, also.

An outcry from the fore-castle came from a seaman who had found his trunk broken open, and nearly fifty dollars, saved from advance money, found to have been taken.

This brought other seamen to look into their chests, and with dismay and anger they soon learned that the accomplished thief had literally cleaned them all out of money. He had taken, as nearly as could be ascertained, between seven and eight hundred dollars, and doubtless escaped to shore in some one of the fruit boats, which had been allowed to come alongside.

"Go right on shore, Mr. Peters, and have the police furnished with his description. Also have placards printed in English and Chinese, with an offer of one thousand dollars reward for his delivery on this ship, dead or alive. Go to our consignees—they will see to the printing and posting. And put your revolver in your belt. If you see him, take him or kill him, I don't care a cent which!"

"I'd rather kill him than eat a turkey dinner," said Mr. Peters.

And he had a boat called away, and instantly set out for the shore.

The two captains now had time to talk over their business matters, while Everett and Freddie Butler exchanged accounts of their hair-breadth escapes.

CHAPTER VIII.

A LETTER FROM SAM.

Peter Philpot took an impression of the sideboard lock in wax. He went out and got a key fitted to it by an accommodating locksmith, of whom there are a great many to be found in our large cities. After that he found consolation for his sores and sorrows in old brandy, while his tyrant sister was busy at her duties in the school-room.

He had taken a couple of stiff horns one day, when the outside door-bell rang. Peter went to open it himself. A postman handed him a letter. It had a foreign postmark on it. He hurried to the library to open and read it.

When he had read it through, he uttered a cry of glee, and danced about the room like a madman.

"It'll be all mine—every cent—for I'll get rid of him, and of her, too, the cruel, heartless jade!" he cried. "It'll be all mine—this house and furniture, ten city lots, the bank stock, and all. And I'll splurge on it; I'll live like a king."

Again he danced about the room like a harlequin, in his sardonic glee.

"What are you up to? What does this mean?" cried the shrill voice of his sister. "Ah, a letter? Who is it from?"

"My friend from abroad—the man who went out to take care of Everett Squires' and our interests, my dear," said Peter, very humbly, for she had the cowhide in her hand.

"Let me see it."

Snatching up the letter, she read it aloud:

"MR. PETER PHILPOT:

"DEAR SIR:—Look for me by fast ship from Konton in Chiny. I've got my trap all set. The 'kid' dies to-night, and I'll sail to-morrow. I had hard luck goin' out. I had the drop on him three times but I got fooled every time. I reckon the devil failed me, and God helped him! This'll reach you overland. I send it so you'll be red with the divvy when I get there. No foolin' now. If there is, I'll confess, turn State's evidence, and hang you. Act square, and I'll be square. Don't you forget it. One-third of all you've got is to be mine, and that in cash. So, wishin' you well, I'm
SAM RICKETTY.

"P. S.—The Butler boy is here, and I'll kill him while I'm about it, for him and Everett Squires are ashore in the same house. I seen 'em both not an hour ago. Good-by. I have ten paid murderers here waitin' to help me do the job. It'll all be over afore the ink is dry on this here letter. I must mail it first, for I've got to be off aboard ship when the hew and cry breaks out.
S. R."

"I don't see as you've got anything here to make a fuss over," said Samantha, as she took the letter up again, after laying it down, folded it up, and put it inside the bosom of her dress. "The job wasn't done when he wrote."

"No, but he was all ready to do it. He'll not fail. He'll be here soon. And I'm going to have a bottle of poisoned rum all ready for him. He'll come to get his third, and he'll get a whole—in the ground. That is the kind of a cockroach that I am. Ha! ha! I'm no fool, Samantha."

"Neither am I, Peter."

"What do you mean, Samantha?"

"Just what I say. I've got this letter, and I'm going to write a full account of your bargain with this burglar and murderer, and seal it and the letter up, and put it in bank to be opened, and read, and acted on, if anything happens to me! Do you understand? For if two holes in the ground were filled, your whole would not be contested, or shared."

"Oh, Samantha, do you think I'd harm a hair of your head?"

"It would be easy to buy more if you did. I know you, you poor, miserable coward. You'd poison me as quick as you would him, if you had the chance."

"Oh, Samantha! How can you talk so?"

"Because it is the truth, and you know it. But I've got proof now, and I'll keep it, and put it where it'll hang you, if I'm killed. So put that in your pipe and smoke it."

CHAPTER IX.

A HOT BATH.

The two ships, Tidewater and Highflyer, had been discharged, cleaned, and made ready for the return voyage when their cargoes should arrive. With only a harbor watch on board, the vessels laid in their berths, while the crews, quartered in a healthy boarding-house in the suburbs of the great city, had more than ordinary comfort.

The two captains, their officers, and our boy hero, with his old schoolmate, the Butler boy, were quartered in a spacious bamboo cottage, on a breezy knoll outside of the city limits, where with the two cabin cooks and a half-dozen Chinese servants, they got along famously well.

All went well until one night, when, the evening meal being ready, they all adjourned to a cool outside room, opening toward the water, to enjoy it.

Everett Squires joined them with his friend Freddie Butler, now also able to walk, though yet very feeble, and all sat down to the table together.

"This isn't like old times, Freddie," said Everett, as he cut into a juicy breast of duck cooked in curry. "If Peter Philpot and the aged maiden Samantha could look in here now, how do you think they'd feel?"

"They—merciful Lord! there is that ruffian, Sam Sloan, looking in at the window!" screamed the boy.

Even as he spoke there was a crash at the three windows facing the water, a gang of ruffians shouting, "Kill! kill!" were seen bursting into the room, and a shot fired struck a huge swinging lamp over the table, putting it out and throwing the room into darkness, as the horrible gang rushed on.

With a presence of mind that undoubtedly saved himself and his friend Freddie, Everett Squires ducked under the table as a gang of ruffians came chopping forward with great heavy swords, striking down on the very spot where they had been seated.

By this time the captains and mates were emptying their revolvers at random among the ruffians, and at the heat of the danger, a new ally appeared, he being no other than Augustus Caesar Bonaparte Churchill, the doctor, with a pail of boiling water, followed by two coolies from the kitchen, bearing torches.

Rushing to the front, the doctor dashed the contents of his pail full into the faces of the assailants.

A second later, Short Bob was on hand with another pail of boiling water, and the few ruffians left, among whom was seen Sam Ricketty, bleeding from two or three wounds, fled from the house, screaming with pain.

The fight had been short, but it had been sharp. Eight of the desperadoes lay dead or dying on the floor. Every one who got away had been hit, as was seen by the glare of the torches ere they fled, and many of these had been scalded terribly.

"Hot water am de bestest cure for rascality on dis earth!" shouted Caesar Augustus Bonaparte, as he danced in glee among the dead and dying ruffians. "I'm gwine to practice on dat perfession hereafter—suah as I lib!"

"You'll be like some odder doctors, Snowball," said Short Bob.

"What you doesn't cure, you'll kill! Yah! yah!"

"Hash, nigga! Don't talk dis'pec'ful to a man as is old enough to be your fadder."

On inspection, the two boys emerging unhurt from under the table, the casualties on the American side were these:

Mr. Peters had got two bad slashes on his left arm from sword cuts. Mr. Combs had a bullet wound in the shoulder, which he knew came from Sam Ricketty, whom he had paid back in the same coin. Captain Gregory had three slight sword-cuts, and his left cheek was just cut enough to scar it with a bullet, while Captain Hardcastle never got a scratch.

As quick as every servant could be aroused and armed, Captain Hardcastle and Mr. Combs formed a party to chase the remnant of the ruffians, and destroy them as they were seen running toward the water-side.

But the latter reached a boat in waiting for them, and they were swiftly rowed away from shore, out of sight and gunshot.

So the party returned to the house, and an account of the outrage was written out to be sent to the governor and chief of police in the morning, for in China no business is done after dark in official circles.

"Gentlemen!" exclaimed Captain Hardcastle; "we'll have to adopt man-o'-war rules here, or else go back aboard ship."

"Man-o'-war rules?" queried Everett Squires. "Pray, sir, what are they?"

"To set sentries at every point that needs a guard. To keep an officer on watch day and night. Had this been the case, those ruffians would never have got into close quarters with us by sheer surprise as they did."

"I understand now, sir," said Everett. "And I claim the honor of the first watch, sir."

"All right; I'll keep you company myself. We'll give Mr. Combs the second, or mid-watch."

"And I'll take the morning turn on," said Captain Gregory.

"Leaving me out in the cold altogether," said Mr. Peters.

"Oh, no," said Captain Hardcastle. "You can turn in for a full night of sleep, so as to stand the forenoon watch to-morrow. By that time, if the residue of these ruffians are not under arrest, I'll have a guard here picked from our crews."

"A good idea; we ought to have thought of it before," said Mr. Combs.

The light wounds of the party had been dressed, and a watch set; the rest made arrangements for sleep.

CHAPTER X.

THE VILLAINS ESCAPE.

The excitement was intense in Canton, when the governor heard of the great outrage upon foreign visitors, almost within hearing of his palace.

Sending for the chief of police, he told him that unless the desperadoes, especially their chief, the villain, Ricketty, were captured and brought to justice, he should lose his head.

Nerved and scared into energetic work, the chief did do something.

Before high noon they had six scarred, scalded, and wounded ruffians under arrest, who acknowledged their participation in the outrage.

Without any trial these men were decapitated, and their heads put upon pikes by the side of a highway.

But the ringleader, the man who had hired and set them on, Sam Ricketty, had escaped! He was traced to an opium smuggling schooner, which had left at dawn that morning.

The government at once ordered a very fast sloop-of-war to go

in chase, and to take the criminal if the schooner had to be sunk to effect the capture.

To identify the wretch, it was necessary some one should go in the sloop-of-war who knew him. Everett Squires and Mr. Combs volunteered for the purpose, and while the captured ruffians were being beheaded, they on the sloop-of-war were going off swiftly in the wake of the opium schooner, which was bound to the Philippine Islands to meet a large vessel with opium on board, which would then sail direct for an Atlantic port.

Knowing her course, the sloop-of-war, under all her canvas, purposely carrying Portuguese colors as a blind, steered for the islands.

She was very fast, so was the smuggler. But at sunset the latter was in sight, hull up. But darkness came on, and she was lost to view from the sloop-of-war.

When night drew on, Bill Knight, the smuggler, set every stitch of canvas he could carry, headed three points to leeward of his old course, and when day dawned he was far out of sight of his pursuer, headed for a wooded cove a few leagues to leeward of where the ship lay, which would carry Sam Ricketty over the Atlantic if he once got safely on board.

It would be easy after the sloop-of-war reached the islands, and found he was not there in the ship, if they searched it, to put him on board when the opium was taken out of her, for Knight knew she would never leave until he had taken out his cargo, and paid in twenty thousand dollars that were due the other ship.

On board the sloop-of-war angry words left the lips of Captain Hop Zee, alias Jim Armstrong, when no sail could be discovered at daylight.

Disgrace, to say the least, with the governor would befall the captain if he failed in his mission. Had he been a native, his head would fall.

The chief of the Canton police was on board in person, as well as Everett Squires and Mr. Combs. So there were witnesses to all he did, and the commander was bound to do his level best.

Knowing through the spies that had tracked Sam Ricketty to the smuggler, where she was bound, the captain now stood on under a press of sail for the port where the ship lay with which she was to communicate.

In due time it was reached. The ship was there, but no schooner was in sight. The smuggler had not arrived it seemed. A visit to the ship was made, but no sign of Sam Ricketty was to be seen.

The captain had some cunning. He knew the schooner never would come in while he was in port. So, after he had inspected the ship, he spoke of going back to Canton, and actually got under way at sunset and stood out to sea.

But instead of running off on his homeward course, as soon as night set in, dark and misty, he ran in shore, lowered two large barges full of armed men, one under command of Mr. Combs and the other under his own first lieutenant, with the chief of police as aid, and bade them seek concealment close in shore, and then to row down in sight of the harbor, ready to pounce on the schooner when she should run alongside of the ship after her opium.

Then he stood off, promising to run in shore twenty-four hours later to take the barges off. The latter were provided with water and provisions, as well as arms and ammunition, so they were well fixed, even in case a storm should keep the sloop-of-war off shore longer than was intended.

By the merest chance in the world this disembarkation was made right in front of the cove where the opium smuggler lay concealed—fastened alongside a bold shore to trees.

Thus, when the barges rowed in, the double-banked oars telling only too well by the regular rise and fall that they were regular men-of-war's men, the smuggler supposed he had been discovered, and that these boats were sent to capture him.

Never waiting even to hail them, he fired two heavy swivels in their direction, and with his armed crew boldly opened fire with muskets to beat the enemy off.

The boats, with their crews so far unhurt, were now pulled rapidly in, the men cheering as they came, for a heavy gun from the sloop-of-war, yet near at hand, told them they would be supported if reinforcements were needed before they got their work in.

"Curse the luck, we are hemmed in and outnumbered!" said Bill Knight, to his passenger, Sam Ricketty. "I'll get my crew fairly a-fighting, and then I'll grab my money and you and me will take a short cut for the ship. The schooner is lost, any way, I know Jim Armstrong. He is a bloody tiger when he gets his mad up, and he'll spare nothing."

A heavy fire for a moment checked the boats, for several oars were cut away and some men disabled. This was the moment for Bill Knight to act in.

While his crew, all Lascars and Chinese pirates, were yelling

and firing their old muskets, he and Sam Ricketty slipped off, carrying all the money there was in the schooner.

In an hour more they were on board the ship, and she was under way, all sail set, bound off on her homeward voyage, for Bill Knight, though he bought and paid for the opium, said he would find a safer market for it before he would run any more risk on the China coast.

Thus, when, after a pretty sharp tussle, the schooner was boarded and captured by the barges, the captain and Sam Ricketty were unaccounted for among the dead or living, and were first supposed to have escaped to the interior of the island, where a vigilant search, occupying all the next day, was made to find them—of course in vain.

When the sloop-of-war, with the captured schooner in company, sailed down to the harbor where the opium ship had lain, she was gone. That told the story. The smuggling captain and Sam Ricketty had reached her and gone to sea, on what course no one knew.

CHAPTER XI.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

"Where's your prisoner? You got the schooner, I see. Is the rascal shot or hung?"

These words were thundered out by Captain Hardcastle when he saw Mr. Combs and Everett Squires land from the sloop-of-war on the government pier, where he and Captain Gregory, the Butler boy, and Dan Peters waited for the news.

"Yes, sir; we got the schooner after a sharp fight for her, but the two men we wanted, the smuggler and Sam Ricketty, got away. They are now most likely two or three hundred leagues on their way to America."

"Where I bet this Sam Ricketty will announce me as dead and get his money for killing me out of my estate," said Everett Squires, sadly.

"No! He shall not. Our cargoes are coming down fast now, and we'll load the Highflyer first and you and Freddie shall sail in her for home. She is the fastest craft afloat to-day, and if there is anything like luck, you'll be home as soon as he is, maybe sooner, ready to head him off."

Captain Hardcastle was in earnest when he said this. And when he "put his foot down," it staid there, as a big-hoofed country schoolmaster used to tell his pupils when they played tricks on him.

So, both crews were at once put to work to load and fit out the Highflyer, and as fast as the teas came down they went into her hold. Exactly ten days after the return of the sloop-of-war, the clipper was ready for sea. With a full purse, but with a heavy heart, Everett Squires parted with his best friend on earth—Captain Hardcastle. The latter had given him a thousand dollars to use in recovering his own—a letter to the surrogate of New York explaining the conduct of Peter Philpot toward his cousin and ward, offering himself to give bonds and become the guardian of Everett and his estate as soon as he got home. He also gave Everett a warm letter of introduction and credit to Mr. Sneed, one of the millionaire owners of the ship.

So the noble old captain parted with our hero, who wept freely when he shook the hard, honest hand of his best and truest friend.

Half an hour later the Highflyer, with every kite set, was on her way out of the crowded harbor.

Ten days out, and they spoke a Canton bound packet, which hove to long enough to give them some home papers and to exchange news.

"We've spoken but one craft since we left—that was two weeks ago to-day—the Cardenas, of Charleston," said the captain of the packet.

"The Cardenas was the name of the ship that Sam Ricketty escaped in," said Everett. "I saw it on her stern when we were alongside at the Philippine Islands."

"Good—we may overhaul her yet. If we do, he is my prisoner, or a dead man. Bet your life on that," said Captain Cobe Gregory.

The two ships now parted, and the officers and our two boy heroes went to reading the papers.

"Great Moses! what does that mean?" cried Dan Peters, pointing to an advertisement in a late New York paper, issued the very morning the packet had sailed. Her clearance was in the ship list. "Are you dead, Master Everett Squires, or is this a 'blarsted 'umbug,' as Mr. Oscar Wilde would say?"

Everett took the paper, and read this strange announcement:

FOR SALE—IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE DEATH OF THE heir, Everett Squires, in China, the estate of the late David Squires will be sold very low, in the interest of the next of kin. A splendid mansion, elegantly furnished, ten city lots, improved, and

other property, will be found in the catalogue. If not sold within ninety days at private sale, all will be put up at auction, and struck off to the highest bidder.

"PETER and SAMANTHA PHILPOT,
"Next of kin."

"The wretches! What kind of a game do they mean to play?" asked Everett, in wonder.

"To sell out and run away, before Ricketty gets there to claim some of the property. No doubt he wrote or telegraphed you were killed in the attack made on us in the house," said Captain Gregory.

"Oh, dear! And my home may be sold before I can get there to prevent it," said Everett, in dismay.

CHAPTER XII.

MURDER MOST FOUL.

It so happened that Mr. Sam Ricketty, on board the Cardenas, bound to Charleston, got hold of a copy of the paper containing the advertisement read in the last chapter.

"So," he said to his boon companion, the smuggler, Bill Knight, "that infernal pup, Philpot, has got my letter telling him of the kid's death, and he thinks to sell out and skedaddle before I can get to him. I'll be on his back before he expects me, the low-lived curse. And I'll bleed him now for a full half instead of a third. The cur—to think he could cheat me and live! I'll choke the life half out of him as soon as I can clutch his wind-pipe. Couldn't we get the cap'n to run for New York instead of Charleston?"

"No. I've heard him say New York wasn't a healthy latitude for him," said the smuggler. "He has been in some scrape there, I reckon."

"I want to get there quick as I can. This fellow, Philpot, might get a private lien on that property, take the cash and make off before I can get there the way we go. Once out of New York, the insignificant cuss would be lost, for no one would take a second look at him wherever he might go."

"There is a way we could shorten this voyage a week or two," said the smuggler, looking around to see that no one was near to hear him.

They were walking alone on the poop-deck smoking their pipes, for they were the only cabin passengers and were privileged characters.

"What way?"

"The captain is a slow old muff. He never half carries sail. The first mate is another muff and the second mate is drunk half the time. If the three officers got lost overboard some dark night, I'm the only navigator left on the ship, and I'd have to take her in charge. Then you'd see what carrying sail means, and I could run her into New York if I wanted to, which I'd do to oblige you, you know. Do you take?"

"You bet I do! Bill Knight, you're king. If you'll stop in New York I'll introduce you to a gang that makes and spends a million every year openin' bank vaults, cleanin' out safes and the like."

"I'll think of it. Will you help do the tossin' when a dark night comes?"

"Yes."

"Then I think it's close at hand. Look what a black cloud the sun is setting in. It'll blow hard to-night. All hands will be called. The cap'n will have charge aft, the first mate forward, the second will be in the waist. You pitch the first mate over, I'll see to the cap'n, and the first one of us who gets to the second mate will settle his hash."

"Good. There was never a better plan. But no one must see our hand. The storm and darkness must cover it all."

"It will—easy as tossin' off a glass of grog. So come down to my state-room and stiffen your nerves over a bottle of old Holland."

Then the two went below to get their gin.

When they came on deck a half-hour later a gale was blowing. The great ship pitched and rolled like a drunken man over the stones in a village turnpike. All hands had been called and nearly all the crew were aloft reefing topsails. Suddenly a shriek and a shout, "man overboard!" was heard aft.

Forward a man—the first mate—had gone overboard, but an old hand had done his business. A blow on the head had muffled his cry—he was far astern before he knew he was in the water.

The second mate only remained of the ship's officers. He was met by the smuggler in the waist of the ship with a bottle of gin in his hand.

"It's a nasty night," said the latter. "Take a drop?"

"Thankee, yes," said the mate. He never refused.

He was in the act of drinking, when, with a terrible grip, he was clutched by the throat from behind by some one in the dark-

ness. He could not cry out, or even breathe. He kicked and struggled a minute or two, then he seemed to grow limp and still.

The same cruel hands which had choked him into temporary insensibility dropped him over the side—lifting him bodily over, for he was a slender light-weighted man.

"He has got his last drop, pard," said Sam Ricketty, with a hoarse laugh.

"Go aft; there'll be an outcry when no one is found to give orders," said Bill Knight, coolly.

The work had been done, and not a witness to an overt act.

When the crew came down from aloft after close-reefing topsails, they went to their various stations, and as the ship had been made snug, they expected one watch to be sent below.

But no orders to that effect came. Then came inquiries. Where is the captain? Where are the mates? Two men at the wheel had heard a shout, "Man overboard!" They had also heard a scream far astern. But they could not leave the helm. All that now could be learned was, the captain and his two mates were missing. They must have fallen overboard. Yet, it was very strange that all should go, and no one know when or how.

The crew all gathered aft, in consternation, to consult together.

Captain Knight was known as a good seaman and a navigator.

He was asked to take charge of the ship, with Mr. Ricketty as first officer. One of the best of the foremast men was named as second mate.

Captain Knight told the men he was sorry—terribly sorry—for their loss of officers. He had been below in his state-room with his friend, Mr. Ricketty, and had no idea how it could have occurred. If they insisted, he would take command of the ship. If he did, he wanted his orders obeyed. He wanted to get into port as soon as possible, and should carry sail to get there. He was no slouch, and wanted none around him.

The men gave him three cheers, when his little speech was over, and then he assumed command.

CHAPTER XIII.

SAVED FROM THE SEA.

In one of the prettiest houses on Madison avenue, a solid gray-stone front, furnished in a solidly handsome style, a quiet, brown-haired, blue-eyed, matronly lady sat reading by the window of the front parlor. Near her a lovely young girl of fifteen years or thereabouts, quite a little lady if she did wear short dresses, was playing an excellent rondo on the piano.

"Nettle, your father comes, and he walks with a light, springy step, as if he felt unusually well to-night," said the matron. "Run to meet him at the door, dear."

"God bless my dear, dear papa," cried the young girl, rising from the piano, and going to the front door as fast as her little feet would carry her. In an instant more her arms were around her father's neck, and her red lips pressed to his.

He was a noble, stately-looking man—Mr. Sneed, the senior in the firm of Sneed, Sweetbrier & Co.—one of those quiet, undemonstrative men in business, who are almost always reliable, because never carried away by false enthusiasm. Tender at home, loving his wife, and almost worshiping his young daughter, he was a successful merchant and a happy man.

"Nettie, I have a hero coming here soon—a young hero, but a brave, true boy, with the courage that many a grown man lacks," he said, as he entered the parlor, and greeted his wife tenderly.

"He saved our best ship, the Tideway, from wreck and ruin, and when she was attacked by Malay pirates, stood his ground, pistol in hand, doing his duty. He is heir to a very fine property here, which a rascally cousin is trying to swindle away from him. The wretch indeed hired a man to murder him, but the fellow failed in four or five attempts, and our hero is coming home in the Highflyer, consigned, in a friendly letter from my true friend and captain, Hardcastle, to my care, to see him righted as to his estate. I shall insist on the noble little fellow being my guest when he comes."

"Just like you, dear, generous, noble papa. There isn't such another man as you in all the world."

"In your eyes, pet! But here it is six o'clock. Is not dinner ready?"

"It is, sir, if you are ready for dinner," said a neatly-dressed, elderly man—the butler. "I was just coming in to see if you had arrived, when I heard you ask the question."

"All right, Roberts; all right! Have the soup up, we'll be at the table as soon as it is," said the merchant.

"Papa, dear papa, you did not tell me the name of this young hero of yours. I hope it is a pretty one, for I want to like him, and if his name is Sam, or Joe, or Jim, I can't."

"His name is Everett Squires, dear," said the merchant, heading the procession toward the dining-room.

"Everett? Not bad. There was Everett, the great writer and statesman—it is a good solid name, any way," said the lively little maiden. "I think he'll do, papa."

"I hope so, dear, for when you are satisfied every one else is."

Waited on by two quiet servants, under the supervision of the staid old butler, the merchant, who had only lunched down town, enjoyed a luxurious dinner, cooked in good old-fashioned style—his wife and daughter conversing pleasantly, while all enjoyed the meal.

After dinner the merchant re-entered the parlor, where his daughter took up the evening paper, which he had brought home with him, and read the general news.

"Ah! what is this? 'Remarkable preservation!' it is headed," she cried. Then she went on: "'The whaling steamer Zenobia, arrived last night at a late hour, brought in the captain and both mates of the ship Cardenas, bound to Charleston from the China Sea. It appears from their joint statement that these men were assaulted and thrown overboard by two ruffians named Knight and Ricketty, who had taken passage home in the ship. The dastardly act was done in a squally night, and so suddenly that the three men were close together in the water, and one, fortunately getting hold of a floating spar, called the others to him. On this spar they kept afloat till next day at noon, when providentially the steamer came along, homeward bound, and picked them up. Thus saved by what seems almost a miracle, they will start for Charleston, whither the ship was bound, to intercept the murderous wretches when they land, and have them justly punished for the murderous act. We have sent a special reporter to interview the rescued gentlemen, and will give the result in our next.'"

"It is, indeed, a wonderful case, pet; but read the price-current, please, especially the tea and coffee list. We have three coffee ships, and two laden with tea that ought to be in soon."

Dutifully the good girl turned to the prosaic columns, and the merchant was pleased to hear of a rising market.

At the same hour when sweet Nettie Sneed was reading the remarkable rescue to her father, Peter Philpot, over a stingy meal of sadly buttered toast and weak tea, was reading the same account, with a white and startled face, to his sister Samantha.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE VILLAINS IN NEW YORK.

Fortune, or Providence, whatever you choose to term it, sometimes favors rascals as well as good men. For nearly a week before the Cardenas approached New York closely, the weather had been too thick and cloudy to permit of observations for latitude to be taken. Thus, when on the first clear day, Captain Bill Knight found by observation that he would make the Highlands of Navesink before night, and be in New York by midnight, if he chose, he called the crew aft and made them a little speech, as he had done when taking command at their request.

"My lads," said he, "during the thick weather when I couldn't get the sun, the Gulf Stream has swept us away north of my reckoning, and here we are close to New York. We'll most like see a pilot-boat in an hour or two. Now, it would take us ten days of good weather to beat down to Charleston against wind and current. Hadn't we better run into New York? I'll pay you off as you stand on the books, with my own money, and look to the owners of the ship to be paid back. How does that suit you?"

"First rate," said one, and then another, until all except the second mate had expressed themselves satisfied. He had a wife and children in Charleston, and wanted to go there in the ship.

One man against all the rest was nothing. So the captain carried his point.

He had lied about the fault in his reckoning. He knew where he was and whither he was steering all the time. He had but just heard the lookout aloft sing out "Land ho," when a pilot-boat skimming out from Sandy Hook was in sight.

Taking a pilot, Captain Knight told him to take the ship right in—he wanted to telegraph the owners as soon as possible. The pilot, as usual, brought a bundle of newspapers with him, and as soon as the ship was under the pilot's care the captain ran his eyes over the latest news.

Suddenly his black face wore a troubled look.

"Sam," he said to his co-worker in villainy, "come down in the cabin and take a nip with me. I'm dry."

Sam followed him, noticing that he carried all the newspapers along.

The instant they were out of sight and hearing of the others, Captain Knight said:

"Sam, we're in a bad box!"

"What in thunder is up now? You're not goin' to wilt when we're nearin' land, are you?"

"Not without cause, Sam. But them three chaps we ought to have killed outright, before we pitched 'em overboard—the captain of this ship and his mates—are alive now. They got on a spar, were picked up by a steam whaler—you know we saw her smoke next morning, and they're in this port, or on their way to Charleston."

Sam turned white.

"Has Satan, our good master, deserted us?" he muttered. "What can we do, cap?"

"Get out of this ship with all our money and go into hiding in New York in some one of your old haunts till we can get safely out of the country. I called you down to tell you this. I'm going to anchor ship in the lower bay for the night, as soon as we get in, making an excuse that I want to ask the owners by telegraph what to do. We two will get ashore and up to the city by the Jersey railroad. I've been here before, you see, and know the ropes!"

When the ship got in over the bar, the captain told the pilot he wished he'd anchor for the night. He would pay him extra for lost time. He wanted to go on shore to telegraph to the owners.

"All right, sir; we'll run into the bend, inside the Hook, where there is smooth water, and drop the mud-hook," said the pilot.

So the ship was anchored and her sails furled for the night. Unfortunately it was so dark when this was done, that the man who reported the anchorage did not see a boat from the ship land two men, who rowed in on shore themselves, dropping under the cabin window before they left the ship to take in two heavy carpet-bags which hung there by a rope. Had he seen this, a telegram would have put detectives on the watch for the consummate rascals who were on their way to a hiding-place in the city.

For these two men were Bill Knight and Sam Ricketty, and between them they carried on shore all their own money, and a lot more which belonged to the ship, a part of it being the money Captain Knight had paid out for the opium, which he thus got back.

Their own cunning, and convenient railroad trains, made the plans of the two men a complete success. Long before the dawn of another day, they were hidden in a place which Sam knew to be safe, consorting with thieves and murderers of the most desperate class—eating and drinking as cozily as if they were honest men at liberty to go where they liked.

The ship was taken charge of by the United States Marshal, who had her towed up to the city, whence he telegraphed to the owners, as well as to the rescued officers, who had gone on to Charleston as soon as they could after landing and procuring funds to travel with.

CHAPTER XV.

PHILPOT HAS A VISITOR.

Peter Philpot, in constant nervous terror now, read the papers the moment they reached his hands, and when he learned that Sam Ricketty, his dreaded partner in crime, was loose and somewhere in the city, great drops of sweat rolled off his agonized brow.

"I'll be murdered—I'll be killed. I know I will," he groaned. And he ran to arouse his sister Samantha, not yet up, so as to impart the comfort he felt to her.

She was made of better stuff than her cowardly brother.

"Stop whining, you fool! Go out and hire a special officer to watch the house, no matter what it costs—night and day. Then arrange a signal with him—the raising of the library window, which looks on the street, will do—and the minute this Sam Ricketty shows his ugly face to you have the officer pop in to capture him. Then lie and swear strong, and all the ruffian can say or do will not hurt you."

"Samantha, I only wish I could think so. But I'll do as you say. I can't do no better. And I'm going to get two revolvers for me and one for one."

"Bah! I'd rather have one pair o' scissors than ten revolvers. Scissors don't miss fire, Peter."

"That's so, Samantha. Neither does your cowhide. But I'd rather have a revolver. Oh, dear!—what's that? I think I heard the door-bell ring, and Bridget has gone to market. What shall I do?"

"Go to the door, you cowardly fool. That man dares not come out of hiding when the hue and cry is fresh about him," said the old maid. "Go at once, and I'll get up and dress. If I hear you cry out, I'll come with my scissors."

Peter trembled all over, but he went to the door.

A tall, fleshy man, with white hair and beard, both very long—a man who looked and dressed like a German Jew—stood there.

"I vas coom to see der master of der house," said this old man, in broken English. "I half blenty monies, und if he sell him sheap, I was dink I buy dot broberty dot he advertise. I bays cash, when I buys."

"Good. Come right in. I'll sell out now for one quarter what the place is worth—furniture and all," cried Peter, eagerly.

And he led the way to the library, forgetting his sister's caution, and everything but the thought of getting enough money in his hands to run away with to some safer region.

"Sit down—Mister — you didn't tell me your name."

"Moses Liebman—dot vas my name," said the old man. "Now how leedle vos you willin' to take for all dis broberties?"

"Sixty thousand dollars, and it is worth more than a hundred and fifty thousand—house, lot, and furniture."

"Well, dot is sheap. But not sheap enough for me. Say fifty thousand, und me shake hands."

"Well—let it be fifty, if you take it right off?" cried Peter.

"Right away—soon as I can go get my monies," responded the German. "I make a memorandum—but we'll shake hands on de pargain. We Jews neffer go back on our word after we shake hands—you Christians are no good in a pargain, mitout it is in plack und white—on de paper, I mean."

Peter reached out his hand to shake. And wincing under the crushing pain, he wondered at the terrible strength of that old man's grip.

"Now I'll write dot agreement—you sign it, und I go for de monies," said the old man, grinning, as he saw the tears start from Peter's eyes and the blood ooze out from under the finger-nails he had squeezed so fearfully.

The old man walked right to the desk, took up a pen and wrote some words rapidly on a sheet of paper.

Returning to where Peter sat, woefully looking at his painful hand, he handed the paper to him.

Peter turned every color but black when he saw these words:

"You dirty little scoundrel! Did you think you could cheat Sam Ricketty and live?"

"Oh, mercy! Is it you?" gasped the trembling coward.

"Yes—it is me, you dog! Make the least outcry, utter one call for help, and I'll butcher you on the spot!" cried Sam, in his natural voice, but without removing his disguise.

"Oh, Lord, have mercy on my soul!" groaned Peter.

"Bosh! You haven't got any soul. Now answer me truthfully, or I'll cut your heart out. How much money and stock have you in bank? Speak quick—or I'll help you."

"Ten thousand dollars in money, over thirty thousand in bonds and stock. It is the truth, so help me!" cried Peter, looking with unfeigned horror on a long knife, double edged, which Sam drew out from under his vest.

"And some silverware?"

"Yes—all that used to belong to Cousin David. It is dangerous to keep silver in the house."

"Write me a check for the money and an order for the stock and silver. Write to the order of bearer. Be quick about it, if you don't want your throat cut from ear to ear. I don't stand on trifles with such a false-hearted cur as you."

Peter wrote what was demanded. Sam Ricketty looking over his shoulder, and watching every trace of the pen as did so.

"Now," said the latter, taking up the check and order, "sit down in that chair. And hear me! There is a man watching you from across the way. If you move, or offer to move, or even open your lips for the next two hours, you'll be shot dead in your tracks."

As he said this, the disguised burglar turned and coolly walked out of the house.

"Oh, dear!" moaned Peter. "It is after eight o'clock—in two hours the bank opens, and I'm ruined. He'll get all the cash, stock and silver, and if I can't sell the house I'm ruined!"

"Ruined? What's the matter? Who has been here? You tremble like you had the ague!" cried Samantha, coming in.

"Oh, Samantha! Look—see if there's a man watchin' us from across the street!"

"Fool! There's no one there except them that are coming and going, as they always do!"

"Then run—run quick to the bank—be there before it opens—tell 'em a check for all our money and an order for the stocks and silver has been forced out of me, and not to give up a thing!"

"You fool! You pitiful coward!" cried Samantha, but she started, double-quick, for the bank.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HERO'S WELCOME.

Before the Cardenas had been moved to a government pier, the beautiful clipper Highflyer, from Canton, under every kite, from moonsails down, came flying up the harbor, and two hours later our young hero, Everett Squires, with his true friends, Cap-

tain Cobe Gregory and the Butler boy, stood in the private office of Mr. Sneed.

After shaking hands with his gallant young captain and the two boys, the good old merchant told Everett that for the present he must make his home with him.

"My little pet, Nettie, my only daughter, is dying to see you!" he said.

"And I bear to her the love and regards of Captain Hardcastle!" said the boy, blushing.

"Heaven bless the old man. We have no better in our employ!" said Mr. Sneed.

The merchant now told them all of the arrival of the Cardenas and of the narrow escape and rescue of her captain and officers, and how Bill Knight, the smuggler, and Sam Ricketty, had robbed the ship and barely got away from her in time to elude the officers who were after them.

"He'll be found at the house which is rightfully mine!" said Everett. "He will of course see his partner in trying to murder me—Peter Philpot."

"It would be too risky with all the detectives in the city on the look out for him!" said Mr. Sneed. "Nevertheless, we'll have that house and its inmates and visitors put under police surveillance at once. I will dispatch a note to the superintendent of police instantly, desiring it. He is a personal friend of mine and will do as I wish without any hesitation!"

The note was written and sent off by a confidential clerk in a few moments.

"Now, young friend—my little hero, I mean, for you have come through fire and water to fame among us, we will go, as Captain Hardcastle wisely advises, to the surrogate to get you a change of guardians. He has inclosed to me the written agreement of your cousin to have you murdered—it is all we need. I will most likely be selected for the post, as the surrogate knows me well and we can't wait till Hardcastle gets home. We'll have Mr. Peter Philpot looking through an iron checker-board before sunset and if possible, Mr. Sam Ricketty will bear him company!"

As Captain Gregory wished his *protege*, Freddie Butler, to go home with him to his mother's house, it was decided they should make that visit, and then about three hours later, meet at the residence once inhabited by good David Squires to confront Peter Philpot and his tiger-cat sister.

On reaching the surrogate's office, Mr. Sneed and Everett Squires were speedily shown into the private reception-room of that worthy gentleman.

The merchant quickly told his wonderful story and the surrogate looked on our boy hero with compassion and surprise. Reading the paper which had so nearly caused the boy's death, he at once revoked the order of guardianship vested in Peter Philpot and appointed Mr. Sneed guardian without any bonds.

The surrogate also wrote a note to a criminal judge, asking for the immediate arrest of Philpot on the charges of conspiracy to murder, and fraud. This he gave to Mr. Sneed, that he might in person see to the arrest.

When all this business had been transacted, Mr. Sneed, finding that they had yet an hour or more to spare before the time to meet Captain Gregory and the Butler boy arrived, he took a fast up-town L train, and carried Everett to his beautiful home.

A telegram from the office at the store had already warned his wife and Nettie whom they might expect, and when Everett entered the merchant's home, he saw what looked like an angel in white throw her snowy arms around Mr. Sneed's neck, kiss him and then turning to look at him, her lovely face all carnation with blushes.

"My boy hero, who has come to us, dear ones, through fire and water," said Mr. Sneed, to wife and daughter. "Place him on the pure throne of your loving hearts, for he is a king, every inch of him, and I love him as if he were my own son!"

Everett blushed and trembled at his words, but when Nettie, the loveliest being he had ever seen, threw her arms around him and kissed him, he almost fainted with joy and confusion.

"Whom dear papa loves, we love!" she cried. "Is it not so, mamma?"

"Yes, precious daughter!" said the fond mother.

And she too kissed the handsome boy, and said:

"You are warmly welcome to our home, Mr. Squires. We have heard so much of you that we know you well."

"Yes, and I shall only call you Everett, and you must call me Nettie. It is a beautiful name."

"Yes, Nettie is a sweet name," said our hero.

"Oh, I didn't mean my name. I meant yours! It is a grand name, and I like it ever so much," said Nettie, archly.

"Look out, you may have it as your own, some day," said Mr. Sneed.

"Oh, papa! aren't you ashamed?"

"Not much, darling. But come, Everett, we must go to meet Captain Gregory and the Butler boy, and then we'll face the murderous cousins of yours. When they see the documents I carry, I fancy they'll be glad to creep through a knot of hell, if such a thing could be."

"Be sure to be home to dinner, papa, and don't forget to bring Everett with you. I shall have a surprise for him—a dish dear old Captain Hardcastle learned me how to make."

And Nettie laughed till her eyes watered as she thought of it.

CHAPTER XVII.

RETRIBUTION.

Wildly mad, when he found himself headed off at the bank by Samantha Philpot, who had his description as disguised, and who forbade the payment of check or order, Sam Ricketty rushed swiftly toward the mansion, in which Peter Philpot sat and trembled, a pitiful object of fear and wretchedness.

He was allowed to enter by the policeman, who lingered around in civilian dress, for their orders were to permit no one to leave the building without arrest, who was unknown to them as being right. Visitors were not to be hindered in going in, for it was hoped that both the fugitives would go, as a large reward was now up for their capture, dead or alive.

When Sam went in, which he did without giving any alarm, for he carried key-nippers in his pocket, he was followed by a burly-looking negro, who had stood opposite the house for some time, and who entered the library just as Sam did.

"Give it to the cursed traitor! Cut his liver right out," cried the smuggler, who was disguised as the negro.

He spoke when he saw Sam whip out his great double-bladed knife.

"I'm going to, Bill," he answered. "But a word to the low-lived cuss first. It'll be the last he'll ever hear."

"Oh, gentlemen—dear gentlemen—on my knees, I promise to do anything you want," pleaded Peter, piteously.

"A good position to die in! I'm only waitin' for that devilish cat, your old sister, to come in before I finish you, you little, low-lived shyster," said Sam. "Ah, here she comes. Grab her, Bill, and choke her so she can't squall. When I've done for him, I'll skin her alive, tar and feather her bald head, and set her up in a frame for the museum."

"You dirty wretch," began Samantha, as she rushed into the room, her eyes fiery with wrath, and her bony fists doubled for attack.

She got no farther. The terrible clutch of the supposed negro was on her lean and bony throat, and she could not even scream, though she kicked, and scratched, and tried to bite the hands which held her as if in a vise.

"Now, Peter Philpot, your time has come. I never spare a man who goes back on me."

Sam stepped forward and raised his awful knife.

"Hold! Your time has also come!" cried a shrill voice, only too well remembered by three of that party—the voice of Everett Squires.

"Lord, Lord, his ghost!" cried Sam, droppin' his knife, in terror, and shaking all over.

"Fool—defend yourself! The room fills with police!" shouted Bill Knight, the smuggler, whipping out a pistol, and firing at the nearest man to him, which happened to be a policeman.

The man fell, and the deadly pistol was covering Mr. Sneed's heart, when Everett, quick as thought, fired, and broke the smuggler's trigger finger off before it could do its work.

A second shot from the same pistol brought him to the floor, dying, and then, knowing that a ghost couldn't do such deadly work, Sam Ricketty sprang at the boy, knife in hand. But a cool hand and a steady aim were on him now, and Captain Cobe Gregory put in his work in the shape of a bullet through his lungs, which sent him down, bleeding fearfully internally, as well as outwardly, as could be seen by the blood which came from his mouth, rolling out horrible curses as he fell.

"Oh, Cousin Everett, save me, save me!" screamed Peter Philpot, as a police officer grasped his arm.

Everett made no answer. The cur was even below his pity.

"Gracious sakes! There's the Butler boy!" shrieked the yet unconquered Samantha. "I'll tear his eyes out!"

"Hardly, my Jezebel," said Mr. Peters, who happened in, having heard at the counting-house where his captain had gone, and he caught at her back hair as he spoke.

Off it came, and as she rushed on the butt-end of a policeman's club held out to check her onslaught on the boy, her false teeth fell to the floor.

Dying, Sam Ricketty vented his curses on Peter Philpot, making statements, in the presence of many witnesses, sufficiently strong to send him for a life term to prison, and implicating the old-maid sister in his crimes.

Bill Knight, knowing his hour had come, told where their ill-gotten money lay, and asked that what was lawfully his, and in the London Bank book, should be sent to his wife and child, a little girl in London, giving her address with his last breath.

Choked with blood, shaking his hand, clenched even in death, Sam Ricketty passed away as he had lived, a hard, desperate, unrepented man.

The police now removed the two dead bodies. Peter Philpot, pleading and weeping, craving a mercy he had no right to expect, was ironed, and ready for prison, and Samantha was told to get ready for the same destination.

"I'll die first!" she shrieked, and, rushing for the kitchen, she disappeared so suddenly that the police, astute as they were, could not find her.

Bridget, who had been out of the house when the tragical occurrences above stairs were going on, was questioned, but with a faithfulness creditable to one who had been treated as badly as she had been, refused to say where her mistress had hid.

It might have saved the miserable spinter's life had she done so, for the police had finally raised the lid of an old cistern in the back yard, and there Samantha Philpot lay, in less than a foot of water, face down, she having gone in head first, and got so stunned by the fall, that she could not get up till she was lifted, lifeless and limp, to the upper air.

With Peter in prison, a life sentence surely hanging over him, and a good guardian to see to his interests, nothing now could keep our young hero from his rightful *demesne*.

He was congratulated by all present on the termination of his troubles, and Mr. Sneed, owing his life to the quick eye and sure aim of the brave lad, could not say enough in his praise, or promise too much as a reward.

Everett, upon whose lips a rose-leaf kiss still lingered, knew that in all the world there was but one thing he desired, but he would have died sooner than ask for it before it was offered. His boon, could he have named it, would be Nettie's love—he meant to win it if he could, even if again he had to face a thousand storms and battles to gain his true heart's warm desire.

Parting with Freddie Butler, Dan Peters, and Captain Gregory, at the door of his own house, with a promise to see them next day, Everett now entered the cab that was in waiting, and rode home with Mr. Sneed, for it was near dinner time.

When, in the parlor, the merchant told his wife and daughter how a deadly pistol, aimed at his heart, would have widowed one and orphaned the other, but for the quick, cool courage of that boy hero, their gratitude was almost wildly expressed.

Tears and kisses—tears of joy and kisses of love and gratitude—were showered on him by both wife and daughter. Words seem weak to express what they felt. Yet words were spoken.

"Everett, my hero and my king!" sobbed Nettie, as she kissed him again and again.

"My son, my son, you have saved all that is dearest to me!" said Mrs. Sneed, embracing him tenderly.

Only when the butler came the third time, to tell them that dinner was ready, did they realize that there was a physical duty to perform, and think that those who had gone through such exciting scenes might need strengthening food to sustain overtaxed energies.

With Everett's arm through her's, and one of his hands clasped in both of her white palms, Nettie led the way to the dining-room.

After the soup and fish had been eaten and removed, Nettie called proudly to the butler, Jerome Roberts, saying:

"Bring in the dish that I cooked. Bring it yourself, Roberts; I cooked it expressly for Mr. Squires, because Captain Hardcastle taught me how to make it."

The dish was brought in, and all the time before he looked at it, Everett was wondering what it could be.

Examining it critically when the cover was removed, he laughed long and loud, as he cried out:

"Lobscouse!"

"Yes," said Nettie; "I sent on board ship for the salt beef and the hard bread, and the little bits of pork. The onions to flavor it with I got in the kitchen. Is it nice, Everett?"

"Splendid!" he said. "Even Short Bob, in all his glory, could not beat it."

"Then I'm so happy!" she cried. "The old captain said no woman was fit to be a sailor's wife, who couldn't make a good lobscouse!"

Reader—don't tell anybody, but between you and me—Nettie Squires to-day makes a splendid dish of "lobscouse." I've tried it!

[THE END.]

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